SEGELFOSS TOWN

BY

KNUT HAMSUN

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KNUT HAMSUN

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1920

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Segelfoss Town

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Knut Hamsun

by J. S. Scott

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Book One

I

A MAN up on the hill at the new flagstaff, and what is he doing there? Another of Theodore of Bua's * foolish tricks—if his father, old Per of Bua, had only known of it!

Now Herr Holmengraa, the mill-owner, he had a flagstaff and a flag and a flag-man; that was only right and necessary—for he had to signal the mail steamers and give warning when a heavy-laden cargo-boat stood in to the quay with grain for the mill. But Theodore of Bua had no shame in him, he had put up a flagstaff simply because he kept a shop; and he flagged for anything and everything, and at times for nothing at all, or only because it was Sunday. He made a fool of himself.

Now he has sent a man up the hill again, just as if it were necessary, and the man standing there spying out over the sea, holding the flag ready to run up as soon as he sees what he is looking for. And probably it was only the fishing-smack that was expected after all.

Strangely enough—often as Theodore of Bua has run up his flag and befooled folk, they have forgiven him each time. He had roused folks' curiosity, carried them away, and started tongues wagging; and what is he up to to-day again? That devil of a Theodore was capable of springing anything upon one! Ole Johan and Lars Manuelsen, at any rate, are full of curiosity; they have met down on the road and can't take their eyes off the man on the hill.

Ole Johan is the same as he always was; year after year in Herr Holmengraa's service, working with sacks and

* Bua = shop, store, i.e., Theodore of the shop.—*Translator.*

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heavy loads, an easy-going fellow, in long-boots and Iceland jacket. He has never come to much, no, not he; and his family is humble as it ever was, for things go the wrong way with some. But Lars Manuelsen has risen, he has grown with the place, with Segelfoss itself; he is father to L. Lassen, the great pastor, away in the South —the scholar with the makings of a bishop; and he is father to Julius, who runs Larsen's Hotel down there by the quay. Daverdana, too, is one of his children; she that is married to the assistant at the wharf and looks as warm of blood as her hair is red. So Lars Manuelsen's family has got on in the world, as he himself has done; he has been a freeholder for a long time now, and no one has seen him at the store without money in his pocket. That's the way it goes with some. His red beard has grown thin and grey, and he is quite bald, but his son, L. Lassen, has bought and sent him a wig, which he wears day in, day out. If he is to be seen about in a duffle coat with two rows of buttons, not doing a stroke of work, it is, no doubt, because he does not need to, his circumstances have improved so much. No one says aught to hurt Lars these days, but, of course, his old comrades and fellow-toilers on this earth may at whiles say some such thing as: "I don't understand what you live on, Lars, if you don't steal!" Then Lars will spit, taking his time over it: "Do I owe you anything?" he'll say.—"Not you. But I almost wish you did!"—"Then I would have paid it!" says he.

Lars Manuelsen's means of livelihood were simple enough. After all, could a man with such superior children take service with others? Surely not. But when Julius set up an hotel and took in guests, it followed of itself that his old father should be linked to the business. Who else would have brought trunks and boxes from the wharf and back again? At first Lars Manuelsen was modest and his gains small, but his takings had increased of late; a skipper or two came; an odd cattle-man now and then, buying

up prime beasts for the towns; a chance photographer or a travelling agent for an illustrated paper; and, besides these, a common bagman even, with samples in a portmanteau, had begun to come. And all these were free and easy travellers, to be sure, men of the world, who thought it worth a three-penny bit to have a noted man's father to carry their baggage. Of Ole Johan here, no one knew a thing, but everyone knew who Lars Manuelsen was; yes, and he knew it himself too, and didn't let anyone forget it either.

"No, it's not any fishing-boat or smack they're looking for," says Lars Manuelsen. "There's no wind."

"No, there's no wind. But there might be visitors or strangers coming by rowing-boat?"

Both consider this, but think it impossible, think it absurd. No, old Per of Bua and Theodore of Bua had no visitors. On the other hand, had there been a man on Herr Holmengraa's flagstaff-hill——

For Herr Holmengraa was still the great man of whom all thought first. True, he had had a mighty loss some years ago, and had had several losses since, but what's a loss or two for one who can bear it! Rye and wheat came to Segelfoss from America and the Black Sea in big steamers, now as before, and left Segelfoss again as flour for all the Nordland and Finmark. Herr Holmengraa's mill hardly stopped a single day in the week, though it did not work at night as it used to.

But, talking of guests, Ole Johan and Lars Manuelsen could not well think what company even the great man, Herr Holmengraa, could be expecting, for his daughter, Fröken Mariane, had already come home from Christiania and abroad in a red cloak—and anyhow Herr Holmengraa was not likely to borrow Theodore of Bua's flagstaff-hill.

Says Ole Johan: "If I'd time, I'd make myself an errand up the flagstaff-hill and ask. Can't you go?"

Lars Manuelsen answers: "I? No."

"What do you mean? No?"

"I don't care enough about it."

"Oh, well, do as you like for me, though if you don't go, neither of us will find out," says Ole Johan, hurt. "Aye, but you've got so grand, you don't mind about anything."

Lars Manuelsen spits and answers: "Do I owe you anything?"

Ole Johan turns to go, but at the same moment he sees Martin coming along with some birds over his shoulder. Martin is coming from the forest, gun in hand; he hunts game in the day-time—blue-fox skins are seventy crowns apiece now, and otter skins thirty.

"What have you shot to-day?" asks Lars Manuelsen, to make himself agreeable.

"Look!" answers Martin, shortly.

For Martin is short with everyone, and the same to a great man's father as he is to anyone else. Great man—who is great these days? Since his former master and mistress died, Martin has not seen any greatness among men; he lives mostly in memories of the Lieutenant's days, of Willatz Holmsen the Third's days, when the present Fru Solicitor Rasch was housekeeper at the Manor, and Gottfred at the telegraph office was servant in the hall at Segelfoss. It is those days he remembers. Of course there is a Willatz Holmsen now too—the Fourth, called Young Willatz, but he is a musician and does not often live at home: Martin does not know much about him.

He passes on with his birds on his shoulder and with his old-fashioned ideas.

"Why don't you go down to our hotel and sell the birds and get money for them?" says Lars Manuelsen to him.

Didn't Martin hear him? He heard him well enough, but he made no answer. He scorns such a conceited suggestion.

"You didn't see who it was at the flagstaff?" Ole Johan calls after him.

Martin stops. "At the flagstaff? It was Kornelius of Bua," he answers—since it is Ole Johan who asks.

"Was it Kornelius of Bua?"

"Yes."

Martin goes on. He has a special scorn for Lars Manuelsen with his two rows of buttons down his jacket.

Aye, both Ole Johan and Lars Manuelsen saw quite well that it was the shop-boy, Kornelius, who was on the look-out, high up there, outlined against the sky, flag in hand; but they had to be told, of course, and they had to gossip about it. Yes, if it's Kornelius, it must be something to do with those people at the shop, Per of Bua, or his son, Theodore of Bua—and what can it be?

Bua—it was one man only now, to be sure, for old P. Jensen himself lay crippled and "done for" these eight years and did not count; his son was everything and pushed on the business finely, in great style, the way to fortune. This Theodore had a lucky touch in all his plans and undertakings, he outdid his father; he made money, while his father had only saved money. The young man was in the twenties still and had managed so far to guard the place from competition; just lately he had swallowed the baker, bakery and all, in quittance for shop-debts.

Steady and stiff-necked character though he was, this lad, this lucky dog, was limited enough. What else could one expect? Being a peasant born and bred and a sly rogue to boot, he ran his business well—but outside business he was no more than other lads of his class; a little vainer maybe, a little more foolish. People saw him with rings on both his hands, and sometimes he would walk about his filthy shop-floor with silk bows on his shoes. Even his own neighbours laughed at him and said: "Aye, aye, your father should just see you!"

What did he care about his father? He had overcome him and outdone him. For several years now, indeed, he had speculated on his own account and bought fish in Lofoten, as much as he had money for, and more and more

each year, till he got his own fishing-boat at last. Now, to be sure, the lad stood on a great height with a whole kingdom in view. In the autumn he had astonished everyone by selling his new fishing-boat again and making a lot of money. Was he withdrawing from the fish-trade? Yes, for a year. He was taking breath.

In the spring he bought, from a company in Ytteröya, the *Anna;* a big, rotten sloop one could stick an umbrella through; the vessel was worth nothing, but then the price was nothing either. A couple of months later the sloop was put to rights as well and as quickly as might be—re-rigged as a hermaphrodite schooner, painted, insured and sent on a herring-cruise. The *Anna* held together—the bottom did not fall out of her. And in winter did she, perhaps, go to Lofoten for split-cod? That would have been the end of her; but no such thing—Theodore chartered a vessel for his cod that year. That was a strange thing to do, and everyone knew it must mean losing money daily. Losing? It was just at that time that little Theodore had a pin put on a twenty-crown gold-piece, and used this imposing piece of finery as a tie-pin. And what happened in the autumn when fish for bulk cargoes was dry and light in weight? Little Theodore took a load on board the rotten schooner, insured her again, and sent her out. That was the last trip the schooner *Anna* made, right enough; she was lost before she got further south than Folla; but little Theodore had never done a better bit of business. By this stroke he got the capital he wanted for his next move: the much talked-of purchase of merchant Henriksen's downery.

And many other ventures followed. He was particularly lucky with old vessels, and at present he had an old but useful sloop again. And the sloop was expected any day now with a new cargo of split-cod to be dried on the rocks. But she could not sail without wind. It was not for the sloop that Kornelius was to flag.

Ole Johan has a deep-rooted weakness from which he

suffers continually: he is inquisitive as a woman. Now he offers to go right down to the store to get news, if Lars Manuelsen will do his work at the mill in the meantime.

Lars Manuelsen does not work with his hands any more, it is true; but he has refused his comrade and neighbour so often that he does not want to give him a direct No. "I'm not dressed for it," he says, however.

"Dressed? Oh, no! you have eight buttons down the front of your jacket," scoffs Ole Johan, hotly, "and you mustn't get flour on them!"

"As far as that goes——" answers Lars Manuelsen, meekly enough. "But I don't know if my wig will stand it."

"Your wig? Can't you take it off? Are you going to let your wig make you unfit for any work? Confound your wig! Though there's nothing to be said against your wearing it on holidays and when you go to communion."

So Lars Manuelsen went off by the short cut up to the mill without making any more ado. He's too much of a man for that. He sees over his shoulder that Ole Johan goes off in the direction of the store.

Up at the works he is well known from former times, and he finds his work himself. But he does not stoop more than necessary, and he does not lift heavy weights now—that's a thing of the past, before he took such a great dislike to hard work.

There stands Bertel of Sagvika at his post. He has risen in the mill-owner's service to a place of trust, with somewhat higher pay than when he began. Bertel of Sagvika and his wife are doing pretty well; he himself earns steady wages, and his wife was one of those who sewed sacks for the works and so made something to eke out with. Their children were turning out well and each of them got something to do as soon as they were confirmed. Gottfred had a permanent post now at the telegraph-office, and their daughter, Pauline, was still housekeeper at Segelfoss Manor for such

folk as Young Willatz had left there. This Pauline, as we know, had been well trained in household economy and cooking in the old Willatz Holmsens' time, so she might have been a very comely and fitting mistress for Larsen's Hotel —and wasn't Julius thinking of her? Indeed! he had thought of her a long time, had been in love with her and wooed her untiringly; but Pauline had refused him. Lars Manuelsen cannot keep from lounging over to where Bertel is for a chat; first, of course, he explains that he has not come to work here again, but is only on a flying visit to do Ole Johan a good turn.

"I understand," answers Bertel, laughing a little to himself.

"I'm not taking work any more. I don't need to."

"No!" answers Bertel, laughing to himself still more, for Bertel has grown merry and light-hearted as the years go by.

"For the matter of that, Julius owns Larsen's Hotel with food and drink and made-up beds, and everything you can think of."

"I don't doubt it!"

Lars Manuelsen says:

"How is it going to be? Is Julius to get Paulina? Have you heard anything?"

"No."

"For I'll tell you what," goes on Lars Manuelsen; "if she took him, Lassen, my son, could marry them, and that would be a little bit more, I should fancy, than if anyone else were to do it."

To this Bertel answers that he knows nothing about anything; Paulina must do as she will, it does not seem that she cares to leave the Manor.

"Do just what she likes, can she? What's she thinking of? I never heard such nonsense! Has she an eye on Willatz himself? A wastrel and a musician, now in one country, now in another. And the estate left to his man, Martin, to look after."

But Bertel has kept some of his old regard for the house

of Holmsen; he is put out by Lars Manuelsen's sneer at Young Willatz, and he lets it be seen.

"Your mother bore a wastrel," he said, "and you're he. Willatz! Willatz is so far above both me and mine that he does not see us down below on the earth, and still less does he see Paulina who serves him for a yearly wage. Willatz! he's a gentleman; but what are you and I? And as for that foul mouth of yours, Lars, it won't worry him—he'd soon shut you up!"

And, with that, Bertel spat contemptuously into the air.

Lars Manuelsen is on his dignity and says nothing. It was many a long day since anyone had spoken so rudely to him, and now he turned away—went back to his post and his work and away from Bertel of Sagvika.

Down the road comes Herr Holmengraa the mill-owner himself. It is strange how he has altered! A grey jacket, grey trousers bagged at the knees, a pair of heavy boots, white with flour, and a big, unbrushed hat—that was the kind of finery he wore. The winters had grown milder year by year, but folk who used to wear jackets, now wore greatcoats, they had grown so fine, they had grown so chilly; yet Herr Holmengraa comes along in a grey jacket. Even the sheriff at Ura has a cord round his cap, and the pilot on the coast-boat wears bright anchor-buttons; but Herr Holmengraa went about like the master of a fishing-smack or a foreman of labourers. If people had not got used to it these last years during which they had never seen him otherwise, they would have wondered. Was it not he that was King Tobias in this place, before whom everything and everyone gave way? Why, but for the thick old chain on his waistcoat, there would have been nothing to know him by. No! he might just as well have been Theodore of Bua's fish-dryer.

He passes Bertel of Sagvika and Bertel touches his hat. He goes to a group of four men who are filling sacks with flour and tying them up; some salute him, some don't, a couple nod a little, a couple bend over the sacks on purpose,

and pay no heed. These are modern workmen, they go about in galoshes; they ride to the works—their bicycles are standing near by.

Herr Holmengraa speaks to them; they don't stand upright nor listen attentively—they stand idly stooping over the sacks, hardly seeming to give heed. When their master has spoken, they straighten themselves, consider what he has said for a little, and then begin to talk loudly among themselves, and in their master's hearing—doubt whether his decision is right, ask one another's opinions, spit, and lay their heads together. "What do you think, Aslak?" they say. "What shall we do?" say they.

The mill-owner has turned to go, he has even gone a few steps, but when he hears the last words, he calls to them over his shoulder: "What shall you do? You will do what I said!" With that he thinks he has settled the matter, no doubt. Ah! perhaps it was far from settled; but the mill-owner sees, as he has seen before, that their respect for him has gone; he dreads a quarrel and goes off. He does not dare to do more, maybe. The mill-owner had dismissed the man, Aslak, before, but then the other men had threatened to go too. This had happened twice, and twice nothing had come of it.

Now if it had been the former owner of Segelfoss estate, the Lieutenant! A cut with his riding-whip in the air—"Go!" In the past years Herr Holmengraa had often had cause to think of Lieutenant Holmsen: his words were few—two, four—his eyes glowed like branding-irons. When he clenched his hand round his whip-handle, the knuckles went white; but when he opened his hand to reward someone, he made the hour rich and memorable. It was good to be under him, for he was of those who could command, he was a leader, he was a master. Did he wear gold rings in his ears like the big sloop-skippers from the west country? Did he smoke a long meerschaum pipe mounted in silver? Was he fat, did he need two chairs to hold his bulk? Not he! And, all the same, no one was

given more room than he, and no one took liberties with him.

Herr Holmengraa still thinks of him with wonder. Hadn't he, Holmengraa, tried to get the upper hand of his men in all sorts of ways? Aye, had he not even hit upon the idea of joining the freemasons, that he might have their mystic power at his back? But people had not taken much notice of that; no one was afraid of him, no one was simple enough. And, indeed, none knew for certain whether the mill-owner really was a freemason or not.

He goes over to Lars Manuelsen and says: "Good day, Lars. Have you begun to work for me again?"

Lars answers: "No fear. I'm only here for a short spell."

"Where is Ole Johan?"

"He was kept down below. I was to take his place for a bit."

"I sent a day-labourer here this morning, to help; where is he?" asks Herr Holmengraa.

"A day-labourer? Was that Konrad?" No, Lars Manuelsen has not seen any Konrad.

"He has his meals at my house, he has his board, he was to come here this morning."

"Then he'll be sitting waiting somewhere about. Shall I find him?"

"Yes, find him."

Everything is going wrong, and the mill-owner knits his brows. Of a truth, this King of the Segelfoss mill had his troubles. He was a good-natured and comfortable-looking man some years ago: blue veins were showing on his temples now, his nose was thin, wrinkles were spreading round his eyes, and his beard was grey. Everything about him was thin, his hands and face, his thighs—aye, he had grown to be nothing but skin and bone. But was he a man of no account because of that? If so, he could not have stood where he was now! There was not the same lavish profusion about all he did as of yore, it is true; no, his mill worked by day only and with fewer hands; but King Tobias

had not gone to pieces, he was of stouter stuff than that. When he stands there thinking, gazing down his mighty river, away to the wharf and the sea, and lets his brain work freely, he looks strong and his eyes are full of courage. Youth, indeed, had left him, but old age had not yet come; he was a man well on in years, but it was said he still begot children in the country round.

Lars Manuelsen comes with the day-labourer, and the mill-owner asks: "What have you done to-day?"

"Well, I have just been sitting by myself up to now," answers Konrad.

"He was sitting smoking," reports Lars Manuelsen.

"Yes, what was I to do?" asks Konrad. "Ole Johan didn't turn up."

"You could have come to me and been set to work when I came," says Lars Manuelsen, with a superior air.

But Konrad snorts contempt: "To you? I ought to have come to you?"

"Yes, you ought," puts in the mill-owner.

"No, I ought not," says Konrad. "And if you want to knock something off for this spell, I don't want anything for it."

"That puts everything right, do you think?" asks the mill-owner. "But the work you were to have done lies there undone."

"Yes, but if Ole Johan didn't come? How could I have done anything else?"

"And am I to deduct the two meals you've eaten to-day, as well?"

To that the man answers: "Meals? Was I to go to work fasting? It's getting worse and worse for us wage-slaves, you begrudge us even a bite of food."

There would have been a fine bandying of words again, had the mill-owner not held his peace. He knew beforehand what would happen: he would have to keep the man.

"I really ought to send you straight home," said the mill-owner, as he went away.

Konrad had an answer ready. "Do you think that? I'm simple enough to think there's law and justice in the land. And if I go down to the newspaper, I'm sure they'll think the same there."

Yes, they have the same ideas in the newspaper, it's true, thinks Herr Holmengraa; in the good *Segelfoss News* which was now in its seventh year and guided the town and district. The mill-owner had been mentioned in the paper more than once; one thing and another had been brought up against him; they had beat him down over the price of flour, too—wheat-flour and fine rye-flour in particular had grown dear for the poor, they said. But the *Segelfoss News* was a just paper too; the editor did not fail to give one one's due, and when he did approve, his opinion was not without weight. "We," he said. "Our view," he wrote. Once in a way he benevolently applauded Herr Holmengraa's doings, and once he wrote:

"We find ourselves, in the circumstances, obliged to approve of the mill-owner's alteration of the cart road up to the works. The gradient is now distinctly less and his carters can take 100 kilos more load. The road is a little longer than before, but the heavier loads they can take make up to the carters for this. We will, therefore, state it as our opinion that the making of the new road was an advantageous arrangement for our town, although we will permit ourselves to remark that many a poor man's horse has to climb steeper hills with heavier loads to drag. It is also, undeniably, an advantage to the employer that, of a morning, the hard-worked labourer can now ride his cycle right up to his place of work and so begin his day's slavery with all his powers intact. Take note, workmen!"

Ole Johan comes lumbering up at last. He is one of the good old hands at the mill; stupid and hidebound, but faithful and strong, a worker who does not think of sparing himself at a pinch. His politeness shows itself by his touching his cap while still a long way off and shouting:

"Good day! I'm ashamed to be so late, but I got Lars to take my place for the time."

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Herr Holmengraa merely nodded and left the works.

"Was he angry?" asked Ole Johan, looking after him.

"Most likely!" answered Lars Manuelsen, making the most of it.

"Wasn't he, just!" said the labourer, with an air of importance.

And now the whole story was told, and talked over, and commented upon. The labourer did not forget to repeat what he had answered the good gentleman: "'There's law and justice in the land,' says I."

"Yes, I was there and heard you," says Lars Manuelsen, who is now on Konrad's side. Encouraged by this backing, Konrad grew yet more puffed up.

"You know, Lars, and you too, Ole Johan, I do my work and bear my burden. But when he goes on like a tyrant or a slave-driver, I don't mind saying that I'm not the man to hold my tongue. He can jolly well keep that in mind! For I'll either tell him what I think to his face, or not a word will he get out of me."

"By the way," says Lars Manuelsen, "what was it I was going to say?—Does anyone know what Theodore of Bua is flagging for?"

Konrad was hurt, he had thought he could hold their interest a good deal longer. So he went away past Bertel of Sagvika, past the bicycles—which he took time to look at a little in passing—and came to a standstill by the group which was tying up the mouths of the sacks.

But Ole Johan sat down heavily on a sack of flour so that a cloud of dust rose around him. The pig! Oh, but that was nothing! What did a little flour more or less matter to his clothes? They were a mixture of cloth and flour before; there were patches of dough on them already.

"What he's flagging for?" he said. "I asked him what he had a man standing and getting frozen stiff on the flagstaff-hill for. 'You'll see in good time,' answered Theodore."

"Yes, that's his way; he has a trick of answering like that," says Lars Manuelsen, vexed.

Ole Johan got up and pulled his jacket off to start work; but his inquisitiveness was so great it paralysed him. "If I could only get to the bottom of it!" he said. "What do you think, Lars?"

"I wonder if it isn't all Theodore's foolery and vanity!"

Ole Johan said: "Do you know what I think, Lars? I think it's nothing else but Theodore's foolery and vanity again. Drat him!"

But this solution only did them out of a fairy-tale and left them nothing to work upon. Ole Johan still could not settle down to anything; he said suddenly:

"What if it should be the Crown Prince of Sweden? What if he should be going hunting?"

"It might be that!"

And, with that, Ole Johan became so absurdly excited that he pulled his jacket on again and said: "Let's go and hear what Aslak and the others think."

So the time passed. These people worried and cudgelled their brains in their own fashion, and fed their hearts. They had visions, too, when they peered into the land of fantasy.

But the work stood still.

When they got to Aslak and the others, they had the story over again of the day-labourer's brave assertion that there was law and justice in the land. And Konrad's memory had not been dulled; on the contrary, it had been sharpened; and now he bethought himself that he had slung the word "slave-driver" into the face of the owner, with "freemason" after it. Six grown men stood and listened to the seventh. The work stood still.

These were the modern working-men, with their bicycles and wind-coats, and dangling watch-chains, men of steel, with the press behind them. They all had their own opinions, knew their own worth; aye, in reality they were the only ones that were worth anything, for they were the majority. How far would the others go without them? And how far against them? Capitalists, the day is at hand!

Ole Johan tried to bring forward his great sensation: the man at the flagstaff. But no, Aslak and the others knew nothing about it, they were hard, practical men, they had not even imagination, they went back to Konrad's business. Ah, Konrad's affair, that was worth talking about, that did one's heart good!

So Ole Johan was both disappointed and hurt; duty called him suddenly, he strode, grandly, back to his place and to his work, pulling his jacket off as he went and shouting to the day-labourer:

"Come along now, Konrad, and quick about it!"

Lars Manuelsen went his way.

"If you should hear anything, come up and let us know!" Ole Johan shouted after him.

Very likely! Lars Manuelsen thought to himself, no doubt. These old comrades don't seem to remember whose father I am, he probably thought. He walked down the hill brushing his coat as he went.

Kornelius still stood on the look-out on the flagstaff-hill. Down at the shop, at the store, there was the same life and bustle as on any other day; customers and lookers-on, children and dogs, assistants shifting cases and casks, heaving into the big country-store, goods that were to come out again in retail.

To think that anything so small could become so big!

II

THE same building that old Per of Bua had begun his petty trading in, but with the shop added to and enlarged to twice the size. That was Theodore's doing.

In the upper attic-room lay Per of Bau himself and would not die. It was a wonder how he lingered, though he had wasted greatly on the paralysed side, till his hand and

foot were like a woman's instead of the good limbs he had had. Die? Of course. But not just now, not before his time! People could mark from a long way off his steady unwillingness to die; he lay there in his bed and thumped on the floor with a stick when he wanted something. He thumped often and he thumped thunderingly, and he mixed himself in all that was going on. He lay with his vest on all the time, too, so that in any case he might not be quite bedridden as to the upper part of his body. But "done for" he was, and pitifully helpless, with unkempt beard and tufts of white hair about his neck. In the summer, on warm days, he could be lifted out, and it was a great pleasure to him then to watch the traffic to and from his shop. But in the short days of winter he did not lie reading news-sheets or sermons—lamp-oil was too horribly dear for that—but he lay in the dark listening to the swans trumpeting far away—miles away, and an eerie sound it was, and made him say "Ugh!" It was like the wind swinging iron-plates, the turning of church vanes, the creaking of heavy gates—ugh! And what the devil should the wild birds cry for? No one is doing anything to them!

But in summer, in the bright nights, Per of Bua was quite another person; he lay making plans and doing business. Ah, but it was mere childishness and nonsense. He was under the impression that trade and business were carried on just the same to-day as in his own time, only that all was on a larger scale. He still believed in an article such as water-crackers—which the sloops brought from Bergen in empty casks and coffins. He believed in nails—cases and cases of heavy, three or four-inch nails; in peppermint-pokes for school-children; in paper collars and shirt-fronts—what would people do with such things now! Per of Bua was one of the old sort, a foolishly close-fisted, over-careful and stubborn petty shopkeeper. That is true. But when he lay there and carried on business with antiquated wares, God knows whether he did not know better and was not but pretending to cheat someone. To cheat

whom? Himself or others, but anyhow someone. He was born to chaffer and bargain, and his ingrained talent for this led him further and further: he was long past shady dealings, he had passed the stage of cunning under the guise of stupidity; he had gone so far, perhaps, that he was now beginning over again—was playing at cheating. A crafty, grotesque fellow.

He thumped with his stick on the floor. By and by his wife came; he ordered Theodore up, and as his wife stands a bit and does not hurry, her husband repeats his words sharply. He does not speak with his wife unless he is obliged to, and does not look at her; no, for he thinks her a goat in human shape.

"It depends on whether Theodore has time," says she.

"Theodore is to come up!" yells Per of Bua.

But Theodore came or not, just according as he had time or inclination. If his father had to wait too long, he sent word again, and in tones still fiercer. You see, the self-willed old man had a certain power yet, quite apart from the fact that the whole business was in his name, and was styled "P. Jensen." Theodore had never yet dared to face his father in all his finery; he was wont to slip his finger-rings down into his waistcoat-pocket. He did this now.

He stops near the bed and, from a lingering habit of respect, he does not take a chair.

"Couldn't you come when I knocked?" says the father.

"I was in the cellar," answers the son.

"I don't believe it. Have we matches?"

"Matches? Oh, yes."

"Aren't they going up in price?"

"Matches? No!"

"We'll buy a thousand gross," says the old man, "and then they'll go up."

"A thousand gross? That's a shipload; and where are we to store them?"

"In the boat-shed. There's to be no more dancing in the boat-shed; it's sinful. I've had a warning about it. But

I'll see that the Old Gentleman has matches in the boat-shed instead!"

From a lingering habit of respect, Theodore does not laugh and does not slap his knee; his father actually wishes to get the better of the Old Gentleman, of the Devil—with matches. Nor does he mean to lose on it; he means to empty the factory and himself to hold all the matches in the Nordland. Foolishness!—his father had grown childish. You couldn't get cargo-room for a thousand gross, they took up no end of space and weighed nothing. And what would a thousand gross of matches bring in? Nothing. Had it been walking-sticks or stuff for blouses, now!

"A thousand gross; I've made up my mind about that. And have we salt?" says the old man, thinking of loading down the airy bulk with a heavy weight on the keelson.

"Salt? We have all we need for the summer."

"Are the bins full?"

"I won't say they're quite full. But salt melts in the heat."

"Puppy—are you going to teach your father? A hundred casks of salt, then. Go and write it down."

All rubbish. Theodore left the attic and did not write it down. He understood, well enough, that it was a matter of great importance to his father to get lucifers so as to be even with the Old Gentleman, since he was willing to risk a big loss of salt to do so; but his father was quite irresponsible. Nor should the boat-shed be touched; it was the young people's dancing-hall, it paid enormously, paid hand over fist. True, the shop had lost its wine-licence, but many a man came to little Theodore still, and got a bottle for Saturday's ball. And when once in a way Theodore himself walked over to the boat-shed in all his grandeur and with bows on his shoes, he seemed a gentleman, a great personage, a man of wealth, all that was great and glorious on earth to every girl who saw him. It must be said, however, that the lad, Theodore, was in love with a princess, and had no eyes for ordinary girls. Doubtless God had laid this heavy weight of

woe upon his keelson to keep him from flying into the air from sheer conceit and vanity. But it was his cross.

He puts on his rings again and enters his shop, his kingdom. Those who crowd round the counter and are in his way, stand aside for him; he lifts the flap, glides through the opening and lets down the flap again. He is commandant now. The young fellow has two assistants under him, shelves and drawers full, the ceiling hung with wares, the floor littered with goods—a shop full of everything heart could desire—silk stuffs, stoves, Vienna bread. He advertised in the *Segelfoss News* just for show—it was not necessary, he had no competitors, but he wanted to be up to date.

The truth was, old Per of Bua had no idea of what actually went on under his feet—"matches," he had said; "salt," he had said. Did he really think that all was as in the days of his rule, when the day's takings would go into a leather purse and could be kept under his pillow at night? The takings were entered in a great ledger and kept in a fire-proof safe in the office now; and the office—that was for Theodore only, and there he sat on a high stool and wrote all over the world.

Before, when he was small, he used to write "Yours faithfully, Theodore Pedersen," because his father's name was Per; now he signed himself "Theodore Jensen," because his father called himself Jensen. It was his mother who had rechristened his father—she wanted to wear a hat and be called madam. That's the way things grew—one thing with another, and the business most of all. Matches and salt? No! canned goods and macaroni and Gruyère! The stubborn cripple up in the attic wanted goat-cheese now as in the old days—the foolish old man; goat-cheese was not to be got now, for no one kept goats any longer. The article was out of date, just as paper collars and water-crackers were out of date. The old fellow could have something called "fat-cheese" in its place, and he could have something called "dairy-cheese" in its place—no, thank you;

he spat the stuff out on to the floor. He was the worst customer the store had, for he was so old-fashioned. Couldn't he be like other folk and take Roquefort in tin-foil and Camembert in dainty wooden boxes? But those were all frauds. He understood about milk and dumplings; but macaroni, what was that? He had not kept pace with the progress of the place and of mankind: there was no one now who did not eat all the macaroni he could get, and sweetmeats made of it were much liked, and dainty dumplings made of it were in great demand, and they would have liked to have had a swaying macaroni-forest here too, just as in foreign lands.

And the greatest boon of all was the ease and simplicity of housekeeping as compared with former days. Butter? One did not churn butter any more—one went to the store and bought margarine. Storehouse and shed full of meat, pork and fish? One would have died of laughter at anybody who kept salt meat. In the name of all that's reasonable, wasn't there food to be had in tins—tinned food? It was ready cooked, it was chewed too, it was ready to put into a cloth to make a child's sucker of for all mankind. How the poor women in the cottages had had to slave at housekeeping in bygone times as compared with to-day! What did mouths want with teeth any more? Weren't there false teeth hanging on a string in the tooth-maker's shop? And as for the tinned foods themselves, you only needed a spoon. Moreover, tinned food was fresh; it dealt gently with people who had already got stomach-trouble from eating it. Wasn't that an advance along the whole line?

But Nils the shoemaker and his son had been beggared. They who at one time were the most necessary people in Segelfoss and the neighbourhood; they who sewed leather boots which lasted a year or two, and who could put on a patch that was an ornament and a credit to the boot—they were beggared. People bought their foot-gear at the store, now. Yes, indeed! And such wonderfully polished

foot-gear too, and so pointed at the toes and looking as if it would almost melt in your mouth.

When Nils had held out a few years, growing thinner and thinner, like a shadow of himself—he was as light on his feet, indeed, as a candidate for confirmation, when he stole from cottage to cottage cadging a slice of bread and a cup of coffee—and when, on every dust-heap, he came upon these ready-made shoes and boots, which people had worn for a couple of months and then thrown away—well, when Nils had held out like this some years, he set resolutely to work and begged a passage over to America for his son, while he himself stayed behind, living along from day to day on starvation fare. He came across a charitable soul now and then, it is true. He met Baardsen of the telegraph-office, the telegraph-superintendent, and got many an odd halfpenny from him. It was a strange friendship, this between those two. It began by Nils the shoemaker going to the telegraph-master one day, pointing to his boots, and asking if he might half-sole them. "No," said Baardsen, "I can't afford that. But I have a dram and a couple of crowns," said he. And since then the shoemaker always got something when Baardsen could spare it.

Julius was quite good to him too; Larsen's Hotel had many a bite of food for the gaunt scarecrow. "Let Nils have some food, he has come a long way," said the hotel-keeper to his mother, who ran the kitchen; "let him have a good feed of meat," said Julius. "And if you go to the manor now, to Paulina, you won't have come straight from Larsen's Hotel without a meal," said Julius to Nils—"It's never happened yet that I've got past Larsen's Hotel without a grand feed," answered Nils on his part, slily and cringingly. The poor old soul!

Another good kitchen to come to was Fru Solicitor Rasch's kitchen. Nils the shoemaker never saw the solicitor himself—no, he was fat and big and always sat in his office, and puffed and panted, and carried on great affairs.

But Nils saw that good soul, Fru Rasch; she who was Jomfru Salvesen at Segelfoss manor in the Lieutenant's days, and who had become a great lady since. Yes, indeed, everybody had gone up in the world since then! At the Lieutenant's Jomfru Salvesen had served for wages, and, strange to say, she had been satisfied and happy there. But she was Fru Rasch now and had plenty of money, and was mother of two children—what more could she want! And all the same she was wretched and nervous and restless; she wept often, and went on foolishly, though she could dress in velvet and fine feathers. What a state of things! Had having two children been too much for her, perhaps? Or was it that she could not forget that wharf-manager at Herr Holmengraa's wharf—to whom she had been engaged when Solicitor Rasch came and married her?

When Nils the shoemaker came stealing into the kitchen with a broom which he might have made for her, or with a child's shoe which he might have sewn together a bit, Fru Rasch would sit down by him, and serve him with food, and talk of old days, and ask about his son in America. Yes, it was this strange Fru Rasch herself who had hit upon the idea of this journey to America, though she could not spare the money herself, unfortunately; she could only give a few crowns—twenty crowns, which she had screwed out of her housekeeping accounts by many months' pilferings. And the foolish woman almost wept when she gave Nils the shoemaker these twenty crowns, this small sum for his son—she blushed with shame that it was so little. "But, look here," said Fru Rasch, "here is more, here is money for the whole ticket—and that's from Young Willatz," said she; "Willatz Holmsen, you know!" And Fru Rasch went on to tell how she had written to Young Willatz—he was far away, out in the great world—he played music to people, and was a famous man. Yes, she had written to him and got all she asked for, got more than enough. "Money?" Young Willatz had answered. "Of course!" he had answered. Just as his father did in his

days when anyone came and asked him. Ah! the Holmsens at the Manor, *they* were gentlefolk. And the son was the same, just exactly like his parents. He is coming home this summer, and will make a long stay in his big house.

Fru Rasch is so deeply moved she talks enthusiastically to Nils, not noticing that her servant-girls are listening. But every now and again she seems to be sitting on pins and needles, and begs Nils to make haste and eat up the bread and butter and bits of cake, so that she may have the table cleared again, as it does not do to have anything left on it. Then she goes out into the larder for a moment, and when she comes back she asks whether Nils will take this other child's shoe and sew it together too; and she has packed it up in this big parcel so that it should not be easily lost, she says.

When Nils the shoemaker is standing at the door again with the packet under his arm, Fru Rasch seems to be more at ease, and she asks:

"How are you getting on, really? For you are not over well clad for this cold weather."

"Clad?" returns Nils the shoemaker, joking and laughing all over his wizened face because he has had his fill. "I really couldn't bear more clothes on me than I have. And besides I run about so quickly that the cold is left far behind. Ha, ha! that's just what I do!" says Nils.

And Fru Rsach asks: "Don't you get a little from your son?"

"Oh, yes!" answers Nils. "Yes, to be sure. True, it's mostly letters, though—for he has not got so very much either. But I'm glad that he's getting on so well."

"Have you never had anything but letters?"

"Oh, yes! A photograph."

"Nothing else?"

"N—no. But he promised to send a little next time. He writes so big and plain it's easy to read. He writes his name 'Nelson.'"

"If only the Lieutenant were alive," says Fru Rasch, clenching her hands, "he would have made your son write so that his letters were still better to read."

Nils does not answer this, but as he is about to go and is thanking Fru Rasch, she says she will get Young Willatz to write to this son in America, to this *Nelson*. And then Nils the shoemaker, quite blind as to this American son who is doing so well, answers:

"Aye, but—no, everything is not going too smoothly for him either, perhaps. And anyway I see from the photograph that he is doing all right and has what he needs of clothes and a watch and so on. He speaks of taking a trip home, and I'm counting the days till he comes. Well, many thanks for your kindness to-day!"

"Come again soon," says Fru Rasch.

When Nils has gone she speaks her mind to the girls: She would teach this American gentleman, this Nelson! Isn't it enough to make one wild? A photograph!—a fine thing for a starving father to get fat on! But just wait till Young Willatz comes!

And now she reminds herself that she really must run up to Segelfoss, to the Manor House—she will do it at once, it has been put off from day to day, she will go this very moment—"Go and get my cloak, Florina! And remember, girls, that one of you is to go down to the store for coffee while I'm away."

Ah, the good Fru Rasch; she had promised Young Willatz to have a look at his house once in a while, and she would do so. There was little Pauline, who kept house and was a clever girl with several girls under her, and there was the headman, Martin, who looked after the work on the estate and was over Halflapp Petter and the other men. Fru Rasch had always found things clean and in good order over there, but in spring and autumn she would make a point of looking over the silver. She *would* certainly do that. Both because it was her duty, since she had promised, and because the silver was a sight worth

looking at. Lord bless you! such dishes; tureens, with gilt handles; cake-dishes; trays; tankards; knife-handles with rams' heads at the end; silver wash-basins in the master's and mistress's rooms. And everywhere, not a corner without splendour and luxury, and paintings, and marble figures, and gilt chandeliers and jewel-caskets.

Fru Rasch revels in it all. She has kept from the days when she was housekeeper a deep-rooted veneration for all on the estate—there was nothing like it anywhere, even to the railings of the front steps. "I don't know what they are made of," said she, "but they glitter like gold." And when she read in a newspaper once of a dinner-service of gold at the palace of some prince or other, she said to her maids in the kitchen: "At the Manor we had a service which was never used." "Of gold?" asked the girls. "I won't say of gold," answered Fru Rasch, "but silver, at any rate. We never used it, it was much too valuable. It was never brought out, it was always packed away. Just think of it—plates for four and twenty persons!" "Plates of silver?" cried the maids. And Fru Rasch answered: "Why, I don't know whether they were of silver or gold; but I remember clearly seeing twenty-four of the plates once!"

Yes, indeed, Fru Rasch exaggerated and lied and was in the best of humours. And so she was in a cheerful mood when she reached Segelfoss, and called out when she saw Pauline: "Here's the inspector come to have a look round!"

And Pauline answered: "That's lucky, for Martin has just had a letter."

"Is he coming?"

"He's coming soon. And now you must tell us what we are to do."

That was not so easy to say, and had to be talked over. Besides the Manor, Young Willatz had the two rooms in the tile-works in which his father had ended his days;

and where would the son live? Both places stood untouched with all their furniture.

"Does he not write where he wishes to live? Listen, Pauline, you must put everything to rights here! Do you think a man like him can live anywhere but at the Manor? Put his father's rooms in order, the Lieutenant's rooms, all the north wing, you know. Come, let us go through them."

The two women set off; memories rose to greet Fru Rasch in every room; she was in command and gave orders as in the old days, dragged Pauline round, pointed, shifted chairs. They went into the mistress's apartments—here, too, things must be looked to and dusted, cushions beaten and curtains washed. Then they tackled the silver.—"Ah!" said Fru Rasch, sinking into a seat. The time passed; the two women were so intent on their work; they dug deeper and deeper down into the silver mine—lifting the things and laying them down, sitting with big silver dishes in their laps. And now the little cabinet—the one that looked such a poor thing in spite of standing on gilt lion's feet—they had never looked through these deep drawers thoroughly; quick with the key! Yes, of course; silver in cotton-wool again, but of an old quaint kind; filigree things, a dinner-service. Pauline lifted up box after box, packet after packet; at the very bottom was a case—up with that too, Pauline; out with the whole case, Pauline! But how heavy it was; and there, when the contents were brought to light, lay two dozen silver plates.

Fru Rasch sprang to her feet. What she herself had thought almost a dream—aye, an out-and-out lie—was a fact! "Didn't I say so?" cried Fru Rasch. "I *knew* they were there, I had seen them with my own eyes; but I was not sure the Lieutenant hadn't sold them—hadn't turned them into money before he died, perhaps. I ought to have known better, a man like him! Two dozen—unless I'm mistaken—count them, Pauline! Of course, there are

silver plates for four and twenty guests; are we in the house of great folk, or are we not? Good gracious me!"

She was wildly excited, she was vexed that she had not brought her two little ones with her so that they might have seen a fairy-tale come true for once. "Who knows?—it might have had an influence on them for life—on my darling little children's whole lives. But I will tell them about it this evening when they're going to bed—you know, Pauline, what lovely eyes they have—both have the same beautiful big eyes—God bless them! If I only had had many more of them! But I'll soon be too old, I suppose, and then I'll have no more, and when these two are big, I won't have a single little one left in the house. I think of that often. Now, Pauline, remember to wipe all these carefully again, and put them back into their wadding and into the drawers again, and let them sleep. Sleep, sleep! A fortune is lying here sleeping! You and I have seen something to-day, little Pauline—indeed we have! Some time I will tell you how the table is laid for a whole service of silver—when every single bit is of silver, except the Venetian glass. And then it's not a case of bread and butter or roasted goat-meat, but three dishes of all kinds of fish, besides five to ten dishes of different kinds of meats and fruit and cheese, and then, at the end of dinner, coffee with liqueurs out of the jars in the cellar. I'll tell you some time how it is when the great folk have a feast. Then we wear starched aprons with bibs and with white gauze on our heads so that hairs may not get into the food. And the ladies have dresses open to here, and gold chains on their necks, and all the gentlemen are in evening dress, even if it be midday-dinner. That's the custom. Then the Lieutenant rises and makes a speech—when little Margaret Coldevin was baptized, the christening was here, and the Lieutenant made a speech about her, that they say was one of the finest ever made by human tongue. But I wasn't here then, that was before I came, but Consul Fredrik told me so himself. And Consul Fredrik! oh, Pauline! he told

stories that I shall laugh at till my dying day, and he would take my hand when he wanted to flirt a little with someone and be fascinating. You never saw the like of him, and he could lay his tongue on the funniest words in the world. 'I am waiting for you,' he said to me—just for fun, for he had been a married man for ever so long. Had it not been for that, God knows what might not have happened between us, for he could talk us all round. But here I'm sitting gossiping—come along, child, and let us go. I'm forgetting the children and lunch."

When Fru Rasch was standing in the doorway ready to go, she had not yet given her last order; she came right back into the kitchen and said to Pauline:

"I'm horrified that we did not think of it before: put the rooms in the tile-works in order too. Wash the curtains and beat the carpets and dust everywhere. A gentleman like him may want to live in more than one place—perhaps; you can't tell."

Then Fru Rasch went away home to her dear ones. And her maids were told about the great event at the Manor at once—the silver, which grew into a very diamond-mine, into a thousand different things, into a paradise. "We dusted the gold service too," said she, as if by the way, "four and twenty plates." "Were they of *gold?*" asked the girls, clasping their hands. Fru Rasch answered: "I did not notice quite; perhaps they were silver. But they were real enough, in any case—every plate was stamped. There's not much difference between silver and gold; if you have silver plates, you can have gold plates too—but silver plates are far finer, especially for breakfast. Have the children had their lunch?"

The maid Florina gave her, in return, news from the store. The place had been black with people, she could hardly get coffee—everyone was talking of what was going to happen and what on earth could be afoot, for Kornelius had been standing on the look-out up on the flag-hill all day. "You'll see in time!" the assistant had answered, and Theo-

dore himself had said the same; but more they would not say. But people had come in all the way from the outlying farms to hear what was going forward.

"The whole thing is utter nonsense," said Fru Rasch. "They just make believe down at the store that some one is coming and then they flag. I pay no more attention to it all than to this glove of mine."

But the girls were smitten with the common fever and as the evening was drawing on they asked their mistress if they might not as well fetch peas and barley groats from the store at once. Yes, they might go for them; and though one of the maids, Florina by name, was unwell at present, and had had fits of sickness, and weeping, and toothache, she could not be persuaded to stay behind either, but went too, only throwing a woollen shawl round her face. So the girls had their outing, and when they came back, Kornelius, the shop-boy, was still standing on the flagstaff-hill and had not come down yet. "We got chocolate from the assistants," said the maids, "and Daverdana came into the shop and got wine, which Theodore himself poured out for her. Just as if there were to be a wedding or something."

This was too much for Fru Rasch—she was only flesh and blood—and she knew that if she did not go for a packet of gelatine and half a yard of fly-net to-day, she would have to do it to-morrow, for in two days it would be Sunday. But she would take care not to make any great fuss about it: she would go down to the store bare-headed and stay there a moment only, so that they should see how little she thought of their goings on.

When she came into the shop she was greeted by everyone, for she was Fru Rasch and had none but friends in the world; but the awkward thing was that the wharf-manager was standing there—the wharf-manager for Herr Holmengraa, and the first lover Fru Rasch had had in the place. He greeted her now as usual, to be sure, without showing any embarrassment, but Fru Rasch felt ill at ease because she was bare-headed and had not tidied herself.

"Let me see your gelatine," was all she said in her confusion. "And let me see half a yard of fly-net," said she.

And young Theodore himself stepped up to serve her; but as he was about to open the flap and ask her inside, she answered: "No thank you!"—she was in a hurry.

And now young Theodore brought out twenty packets of gelatine, as if they were all of different kinds, and he brought forward a whole roll of fly-net and opened it up well so that she might examine it. Altogether, young Theodore was very well-mannered and polite, and he had quite nice hands, too, but too many rings. He began, of his own accord, to tell Fru Rasch whose visit it was he was expecting, and for whom he wanted to flag; and since he had tormented all the rest with this secret and confided it to her now, she began to like the young fellow more and more—for she was only human, and he spoke so sensibly and pleasantly too.

Yes, he was going to give him a bit of a reception and run up the flag for his ship when she came—he was a big commercial traveller, representative of Didriksen & Hybrecht, and the son of Didriksen himself. He had his own steamer and visited the biggest places only. "You know Didriksen & Hybrecht, madam? Well, it is their representative. He telegraphed a couple of days ago that he was coming to-day, but he has been delayed, most likely." Theodore had got tired of those petty merchants in the south who sent a man with a hand-bag only—that was not enough—that was not wholesome business. "We are quite big customers of course," he said, "and we intend to lay in a large stock now for spring and summer."

Everyone was listening with staring eyes and heads stretched forward. Julius, the hotel-keeper, who was a pushing fellow, interrupted young Theodore and asked:

"Is he to stay with me?"

"No," answered Theodore, curtly.

"Isn't he? Will he stay with you, then?" Theodore smiled and answered, more to Fru Rasch than to Julius:

"He'll stay with himself, I take it—in his own big saloon."

And everyone listened with still greater amazement. Was it such a superhumanly great person that was coming?

But Theodore went on serving Fru Rasch, talking all the time and giving himself airs:

"We are making up our orders for the season—our firm is the only big buyer in this part of the country and we intend to give an order for twenty or thirty thousand crowns' worth. All drapery goods; fine, modern stuffs; genuine ostrich feathers; ready-made dresses from Paris and London; everything Madam can wish for. I hope to have the honour of seeing Madam here when the goods arrive."

"Are you getting little boys' suits?" asked Fru Rasch.

"Everything, madam, everything!"

She nodded kindly as she left. To her and to no one else the great news had been told at last, and in the hearing of the wharf-manager, too. Ah! that Theodore Jensen, there was a great deal in him besides foolish tricks.

The shop emptied; people had heard the news and were now hastening along the roads with it, carrying it to the houses—to anyone they chanced to meet. Was it not as they had guessed—the people at the store—this young Theodore of Bua—was such an important person that a special steamship was sent to him with nothing but samples—did you ever hear the like! And if he could spend thirty thousand crowns on ostrich feathers, and little boys' suits, and suchlike, only, what could he not buy altogether!

One man had taken a great interest in the fine packet Fru Rasch had brought; what was in it? Gelatine? What is it used for? The man was from far up in the parish, and half drunk; his horse was standing freezing outside. "Let me have a packet," said he. When he came to pay, he was amazed at the low price, and asked for several packets more so that he might have gelatine to last for

some time. He bought a box of biscuits, too. And then he took himself off with his purchases.

It grew dark and the assistants lit the lights. The shop-boy, Kornelius, came down from the flagstaff, saying he could not see a cable-length in front of him any more; he was blue with the cold and numb round the mouth. When someone made him laugh, his face was quite unrecognizable, and people laughed at him till they ached.

Daverdana was there still, buying a few small things. She has red hair, is bare-headed, and very handsome; she laughs so heartily that tears come into her eyes when Theodore begs her to go home to the children. Daverdana was the daughter of Lars Manuelsen; she had been married some years to the assistant manager of Herr Holmengraa's wharf and she had one child only. What should she do at home with the children? She had one child only; she had no more. And besides, it was a little girl who could look after herself already. The young mother is hard-working—she is one of those who sew sacks for the mill, and so earns money herself; her husband is crazy about her; she is capable and cheerful and makes his cottage comfortable. There are many who are crazy about her, everyone is, for she is such a splendid, passionate-looking girl. But her husband does not believe any evil of her, and is stone-deaf to gossip.

What should he believe of Daverdana? Wasn't she married, with a husband of her own?

III

THE representative of Didriksen & Hybrecht did not come the next day either, and Kornelius had to spend his time on the flagstaff-hill and freeze till he was unrecognizable every day for three days before the great stranger came at last. But he did come at last, and

then flags were run up at the flagstaff and down at the shop, and old Per lay there and could not make out what was the new racket right over his head. "It's that wretched magpie, perhaps," he said, "but she'd better try and build just there!"

Theodore was on board doing business from morning to night; he was hardly seen except when he took a run up to the store carrying whole books of order-sheets. The little steamer aroused a lot of attention; it lay with steam up and funnel smoking all day; many of the people of the place went on board and were shown round—not that it could compare with the colossal grain-boats that came for Herr Holmengraa's mill from out in the great world—far from it—but because it was a passenger-boat for a single great man.

The man was big, and full of spirit and young—a wild young fellow, who was seen on deck in furs and rubber overboots from time to time. He nodded to young girls on the quay and threw halfpennies ashore to the children—a free-handed fellow on his first trip to the Nordland. The wharf-manager went on board to see him; and the editor-compositor of the *Segelfoss News* went on board to see him, and wrote something with his thin, printer's fingers. All who came were offered a glass. Old Lars Manuelsen went on board, too, and asked if he shouldn't carry something ashore. No. Then he said who he was—father of L. Lassen, and asked if he could not be of any use. Herr Didriksen looked at his eyes and noticed his manner and answered: "By Jove, come along and have a glass; I want very much to make your acquaintance," he said. So they went aside and must have got to know one another fairly well, for they talked together some time.

Now, though the ship was lying with steam up, Herr Didriksen was not going to sail in the evening, as he had meant to—no, he would have a bit of a jollification. To tell the truth, he had meant to finish in a couple of hours here, at Segelfoss, and be off again—but Theodore's orders were

too big for him to do that, and now Herr Didriksen was going to invite a little party of men when business was over. He took counsel on the matter with Theodore himself, and Theodore was willing. Herr Holmengraa was not to be thought of, of course, but if Herr Didriksen were to call at once, he might get Solicitor Rasch, maybe. Herr Didriksen would not do that.—"Are there young ladies in the house, though?" he asked. No. Then he would not. Well, there was District-doctor Muus, but he lived too far away, though he would have been the very man. But they must have Baardsen, the telegraph-superintendent; he drank too much, but he played the 'cello. Then who else was there?

They thought and thought, and drank a glass or two while they thought, as a sort of earnest of the revel. As time went on, Herr Didriksen could not see why there should be gentlemen only; why? Why not two or three gentlemen, each with his lady—that's to say, a lady for each? "And what kind of a fellow is this old chap in a wig, who is Pastor Lassen's father?" he asked suddenly. And at last he gave out that he wouldn't have any grand, dull folks. "We can do without them; there are three of us; you and the chief engineer and I, and if it happens that any girls come on board to dance we'll go out on the fiord a bit with them. Steam's up."

But then it came out that the lad, Theodore, was not of that sort; that's to say, he was ready and willing enough, he bragged, but he was half engaged. That was great news, and they drank to it. But couldn't he simply invite the lady? No—and Theodore smiled sadly—it wasn't to be thought of, she was much too high up in the world. And as a matter of fact he would never get her.

Ah, yes! the last glass must have softened young Theodore; he was no drinker and soon became a little maudlin, and then came the elegiac mood. His everyday heart had a little nook where no trade entered, a hidden grove, full of gifts and dreams and devotion.

The deuce a bit of a grove had Herr Didriksen; was too much of a rover for anything of that sort, he boasted. He made as though he was vexed at young Theodore and was afraid that he might spoil his evening for him; wasn't the quay thick with girls! He began to comfort the young fellow and spoke to him, as he always did to customers he wished to encourage: "You'll never get her, do you say? A man like you, a great merchant! I haven't sold more to any single man this trip. She'll think better of it yet."

More elegy. She was too far above him. And then she was so tremendously rich. No, she would never be his!

Well, in that case he ought to give her up.

Yes, Theodore said, there was nothing else for him to do.

"Good! so there's nothing to prevent a couple of girls coming on board to us."

No, Theodore would not have that. That would be to be false to himself. He was firm and steadfast, no one could twist this young lad round his finger. There was enough youthful devotion in him for that, he was faithful still. Bravo!

"Let's have the telegraph-man then," said Herr Didriksen. And he rang for his cook and gave orders for a big supper.

Aye, what a gay dog young Didriksen wanted to make himself out! It seemed as if he could not live without revel and riot and girls; he was such an old hand. He took out his pocket-book and showed portraits of variety-stage ladies; one of them was addressed to him and signed, but he had written that in himself, perhaps—what won't a mad youth do! But he impressed the home-keeping Theodore of Bua; they were both young.

Towards evening still more people came down to the quay—people who had finished their day's labour—the workmen from the mill and the cottages. One man is standing by himself, smoking; Theodore beckons to him to come on board, but the man just goes on smoking and pays no heed. "That's the telegraphist, Baardsen," said

Theodore, "he's probably drunk already." "Get him on board," said Herr Didriksen. Theodore beckons again; no, Baardsen takes no notice of anything. Suddenly Herr Didriksen jumps ashore, takes off his hat, introduces himself and gives his invitation in person. They came on board together.

Baardsen is a big fellow in faded blue clothes, and when he walks he swings his great shoulders. He may be in the forties; is clean and shaven, but shabby and without a greatcoat; he even wears his coat open and shows a vest with a button missing. His nose is ruddy—and that certainly does not come from the cold on the quay alone. No, Baardsen has the look of a steady drinker.

"I am lying alongside the quay till to-morrow, and hope you will give me the pleasure of your company this evening, if you haven't anything better to do," said his host politely.

"Thanks," said Baardsen.

"You gentlemen know one another. What can I offer you to begin with?"

Baardsen was a little out of his bearings; he had come from where it was still light, down into the little dark saloon. He could dimly see a glimer of bottles and glasses on the table, but he answered:

"A little light."

Herr Didriksen rang.

"Light, you're right there; ha, ha! well said! Light!" he shouted to the cook who came to the door. And the host was kind and pleasant enough to his shabby guest.

They sat down and began the evening. The occasion seemed to be no small one for Baardsen; if he was somewhat silent at first, he warmed up later, and he listened to the young traveller's talk good-naturedly. But he did not listen to Theodore of Bua good-naturedly, whatever the reason might be; he hardly saw him, hardly heard him. And Theodore, on his side, seemed to think he could treat the telegraphist with a certain freedom, he had sold so much of his bad wine to him in times past, and knew his

weakness. But young Theodore was out in his reckoning; it turned out that he would have to be careful.

"Can't you nip home for your 'cello, Baardsen?" said Theodore bluntly.

"Yes, when you're gone," answered Baardsen.

"Oh!" said Theodore, laughing. But in a little the rudeness of the answer dawned on him, for he said: "Will you be as high and mighty to-morrow, I wonder?"

"By the way, there's an hotel here, isn't there?" says Didriksen, quickly. "An hotel and an hotel-porter—a certain old Manuelsen, Larsen, or whatever his name is? Father to the well-known Pastor Lassen?"

"That's right."

"There was nothing he could do for me, unfortunately," said Herr Didriksen, laughing. "I have promised that he shall have me at the hotel next time."

Herr Didriksen was beginning to be less flustered; he fought against the effects of the drink, thought over what he said and made a good show of sobriety. He was elastic and young; he wanted to show the telegraphist great respect just because he saw his groggy nose and his missing button.

"There's much that's noteworthy at Segelfoss besides Lars Manuelson," put in Baardsen. "We have a king, Herr Holmengraa; he is a widower, he has a princess."

Young Theodore looked down at the floor.

"We have a deserted castle," continued the telegraphist; "a nobleman, Willatz Holmsen, lived there—he is dead. His son, Young Willatz, is abroad; he's coming home in the spring."

"Is he coming home in the spring?" asked Theodore.

"Yes. But that need not mean that all hope for you is over."

"All hope—how?"

"I thought you looked like that."

"There are indeed many rare things here," Herr Didriksen hastened to say. "That is the castle we see up there inland, I suppose?"

"That's the castle . . . "

"A very fine one, too; I saw it from the deck to-day. If one had a castle like that, one ought to be able to get the princess."

"Did you hear that?" said Baardsen, and looked young Theodore in the face. "One must have the castle at least."

"Yes," Theodore answered back—he blushed, but did not lose his quick wits. "It's nothing to do with me—I have a store. I don't understand what you are sitting hinting at, the whole evening," he added.

Baardsen went on:

"Then we have an old tile-works up at the mouth of the river here. It does not make tiles any more, it's dead; it has two new rooms now. But if the oldest post up there could only tell its memories!"

The host said:

"Yes, Segelfoss is a big old country-place, of course; there's something about it in Stenvinkel's *History of Landed Estates*. And it does not seem to have grown less in later times; anyhow I've done more business here than I have in the towns in the south. Herr Jensen, may I drink with you?"

"I'll join you!" said the telegraphist. "For the sake of youth's many good qualities!"

"Are you drinking with me?" asked Theodore.

"Yes, with you. Does that make you suspicious?"

"Yes."

The telegraphist smiled to himself and said:

"For the sake of your many good qualities!"

"I won't drink," said Theodore, putting down his glass.

The host interposed again, and suggested:

"Won't you gentlemen come up on deck for a while? I expect my chef wishes to lay the table. You have come out without your greatcoat, Herr Baardsen; be so good as to put on my ulster."

They put their things on and went up. On deck, the engineer was talking with the pilot; each had his glass of

warm grog in front of him, and was smoking a cigar after a long tramp ashore.

The evening was light and still, but chilly, and from the river came a soft and ceaseless murmur. Against the forest stood out the great Segelfoss Manor with its white pillars and two flights of stone steps down to the ground—a nobleman's seat, a castle. The mill had stopped working, the day was done.

A fishing-smack came in sight far out; it was being towed in by three men in a dinghy; one man was left on board alone at the helm.

"There comes my sloop," said Theodore. "She has no wind."

"Is that your sloop? Where do you want her to lie?" asked Herr Didriksen. "We'll go out for her. Chief!" he called to the engineer. "Let us fetch in that vessel out there, she's Herr Jensen's sloop."

This took half an hour or perhaps an hour altogether. They towed in the sloop to the goat-shed where the fish was to be spread out and dried on the flat rocks to make stock-fish; then the steamer came in to the pier again. The table was laid, the gentlemen went down to the saloon.

"Did you notice a man in the dinghy with a yellow silk handkerchief fluttering round his neck?" asked Baardsen.

"Nils of Vælta, you mean," said Theodore. "He had got himself up to go ashore to his sweetheart to-night. What about him?"

"You see, Herr Didriksen," answered Baardsen, turning to his host, "we all struggle—you and he and I. And nothing is of more importance for any of us than just our own struggles. One acquires a downery—at night he goes to bed rubbing his hands over the good deal; another goes off for twelve weeks to earn his living—when he comes home his sweetheart has been having the toothache and fits of sickness for the last three."

Both Theodore and his host understood there was some-

thing behind this. There was some hidden meaning; they thought and calculated: twelve weeks, three weeks. Or was the whole thing nothing but a drunkard's babble, perhaps? However that might be, Theodore took umbrage and said:

"Was it my downery you referred to?"

"And those who died some years ago or last year or just lately, are the same people who lived here before and struggled here before," Baardsen went on. "They sold and bought and were happy of an evening if they had done a good stroke of business. Yes, indeed! But then they died. Wasn't it just the same then whether they had made a good bargain or not? I read on the cross over a grave up in our little churchyard the name of Anton Nilsen Vælta. He was father to the man in the dinghy, the man with the yellow silk handkerchief. That father died twenty years ago and not a soul remembers him, not even his son; but he struggled hard and put a new turf-roof on to his cottage at Vælta, and in the evening when he went to bed he rejoiced over this new roof. Then he died and left everything behind. And now his son is struggling."

"Yes," said the host, wishing to throw in a remark so that no offence might be taken, "that's life. It's always the same, isn't it?"

"But if one stops for a moment only and listens, one becomes aware what sheer effrontery and impertinence it is to be taken up with one's trading and trafficking and one's struggles. Isn't it all a matter of total indifference?"

With that Baardsen, the telegraphist, looked down into his glass, his beloved glass, and seemed deep in thought.

Ah! telegraphist Baardsen, the rogue, the villain! he was playing the drunkard's usual trick, no doubt, of giving a glimpse of the reveries, the experiences, the disappointments that lay behind his drunkenness. Perhaps next time he would look up at the stars and heave a deep sigh and not be able to find words. Were his young hearers moved by what they heard, perhaps?

Theodore, at any rate, recovered himself soon; he had undergone the experience before, maybe; he said—and with his mouth full:

"Now, wasn't it a good thing you came on board here to be entertained so splendidly, Baardsen? I beckoned to you up on deck, but you pretended not to see."

But young Theodore was getting a little too familiar again.

The telegraphist brought his eyes back from the far-away depths they were gazing into, and fastened them gently on Theodore.

"You beckoned, yes," he said. "But no doubt you have learned now from this young gentleman, our host, how such things should be done."

"Oh, is that what was the matter!" answered Theodore, laughing, but growing much confused. "I thought I knew you well enough to beckon to you."

"So you have read Stenvinkel, Herr Didriksen?" asked Baardsen, without a change of tone.

"Yes. To give me a little idea of what I was to come upon in my tour."

"That was right. For in that way one gets an insight into the vast changes that have taken place since his days. We meet with nothing in the least like the conditions of that time. Trade? Nothing but trash—heaps of yellow silk handkerchiefs. Our life has got off the tracks; the horses are without drivers, and as the horses know it's easier to pull downhill than up, they pull downhill. Down with us, down! Life is getting ridiculous; all we work for is clothes and food, we but make a pretence of living. In olden times there were great extremes; there was the castle, the wilderness—all is equal now; in olden times fate was the ruler—now it's the daily wage. What is greatness? The horses have dragged it down: let me have a kilo of greatness too—how much does it cost? We buy the teeth in our mouths and plant new growths in our stomachs; the same for all, everything the same all down the line; we parcel out

life between us, use up the oxygen in each other's air and leave behind with each generation a more bewildered and misused world. And the princess? She rides a cycle like her father's workmen; they only half make way for her on the road, they sometimes greet her, sometimes they don't——"

The evening was far spent, the meal was done, but the telegraphist babbled on and went on drinking. The host was still polite and listened, but young Theodore did not hide his impatience; he did not understand a word of the talk, and took it for nothing but drunken nonsense; why should a man be made to put up with it? Young Theodore looked at his watch, slapped his knee and yawned out loud, clasped his hands behind his neck and leant his head back upon them—pure bravado and bad manners. He must surely have known that his coat was faded under the armholes, though it was otherwise new; he was risking Baardsen's advising him to wash, to wash his body. Why was he so bold? When he took a fresh cigar or stretched out for the matches, he upset the glasses through pure swagger.

But the telegraphist did not eye him sternly, did not even look at him; he was probably only in a talkative mood, for he went on speaking:

"They sometimes greet the princess, sometimes they don't and she lets it pass unnoticed; the princess has herself been brought low. Think what it would have been in olden times! Her maids would have cleared the way, her lackeys have spread red carpets upon it. What would her father's, the king's, workmen have said? In those days they would have rejoiced and been puffed up at the punishment graciously meted out to them—to them it would have been a joyful experience, a fateful hour. Now they ride past on their bicycles, proud of their rudeness, but discontented none the less. You smile, Herr Theodore?" Baardsen asked suddenly, seeming for the first time to notice the young man's presence.

"No!" answered Theodore, taken aback.

Baardsen spoke pleasantly to him in the voice, as it were, of a benefactor.

"When some day you get into the castle——"

"I? What should I do there?" broke in Theodore.

"When you are asked, when Young Willatz comes——"

"I won't be asked," answered Theodore shortly, sticking his thumbs into his arm-holes. "Why! what on earth are you thinking of!"

"You will see some old portraits there; these are his forefathers. They are nothing out of the way, to begin with; just proud and undistinguished people. The gentleman in a kind of armour—he looks like an ape—the only thing striking about him is his will—a will that laid foundations. And his lady? The lady is about to sit to her limner, her portrayer; she comes in through the door like a flood of silk and gold buckles and spreads herself over a chair. She is so fine that she must rest her foot on a cushion while she sits, and on the cushion lie three rows of pearls which she treads upon. Then she raises her head; her face does not bear the stamp of a ruler's spirit, but her pride knows no bounds. See, she is so new to greatness, she thinks it is not there unless she underlines it. But out of these two qualities—will and pride—if linked to money, a race of aristocrats may spring."

"Yes, money!" says Herr Didriksen, not to sit dumb.

"Money! But not halfpence—riches! Halfpence coddle a race, save them from wet feet; halfpence keep up worthless vanity. No, it must be riches!"

"I fancy it must be time to break up," says Theodore, looking at his watch again.

A shade of annoyance passes over the telegraphist's face, but he masters himself at once, and makes no sign. It seems that he would like to maunder on; ah, what lots more he has to talk about!

"It isn't late yet," says the host.

But since the whole feast is for the merchant Theodore really, it is, in a way, rude of the good telegraphist to sit

here and monopolize the whole evening. The chief can play the concertina; that's a way out! thinks Herr Didriksen; he sticks out the tip of his tongue, gets hold of his little moustache, bites it with his teeth a bit, and pushes it out again with the top of his tongue. He has made up his mind. He has the engineer called.

"I hope, gentlemen, you won't disdain such music as the house affords," he says, by way of apology.

When the engineer comes with his concertina, he must first have his good glass too, he is so welcome. The concertina looks the worse for coal and oil, but it sounds, it makes a noise. Theodore is livelier already; he knows this music from the boat-shed dances; he drinks his glass to the dregs and sits beating time to a waltz with his feet. The telegraphist looks at him, and Theodore becomes a little ashamed of his enthusiasm.

"Why couldn't you run up for your 'cello?" said he.

"Why should I? You're getting your music now, aren't you?" answered Baardsen.

"Does he play the 'cello?" asked the engineer, throwing his instrument on the sofa. He was at home in the cabin and filled his glass anew, drank, and refused to play again. "Rather let us have a game of cards," he said.

The host looked from one to the other.

"Yes, gladly," answered Theodore.

"Loo! With a limit," said the engineer, arranging everything. On the long trips from buyer to buyer along the Nordland coast, he had arranged more than one game of cards in that saloon, no doubt: he knew all about it. How many are we? Four," said he bringing out the counters.

"I don't play," said Baardsen.

They urged him; they would teach him the game; they could not play with less than four.

"You'll do us a kindness," said their host, courteously.

"But, my good people, a man who has no money in his pocket can't play cards for money," answered Baardsen.

"You are welcome to lose these few pennies for me,"

said his host, handing him a couple of notes. "You'll do us a kindness by staying; we are only three without you."

The engineer had dealt the cards already and the game began; they all bought counters to pay with. Baardsen won. With lazy indifference he repaid his host the notes; played on, won, sold counters to the others for cash and soon had some notes lying in front of him. All drank steadily; the engineer was a jolly dog who joked when he lost, the two men of business were too rich to mind a small loss. But Theodore began to be vexed at his bad luck at last. "I've never seen the like," he said.

"What's the time?" cried the engineer. "From now on we'll have unlimited stakes. We must squeeze the winner; ha, ha!"

The host looked round at his guests again, and Theodore answered:

"Unlimited stakes? I'm agreeable."

"And what does the winner say?" asked the host, smiling.

Baardsen answered:

"The winner? he is ready for anything. I have some notes lying here, gentlemen. Let us see whether you can squeeze them out of me."

"Are you so careless about money?" asked Theodore.

But now things went worse than ever; the telegraphist won again—seemed to be fated to win—he won often on the most ridiculous cards. He lost once in a way, of course, but then he would take every trick several times running, and as the stakes were unlimited, his winnings amounted to a large sum at the end, though Loo is a stupid and a fiddling game.

"There you see, Baardsen, you didn't do so badly by coming on board to-night," said Theodore.

The host could not offend his much-respected customer by taking any notice of this remark himself, but the engineer smoothed it over by drinking with Baardsen. "Ah, but if we had you on board here a week, wouldn't we take our revenge!" said the engineer, roaring with laughter.

Baardsen had now most of the counters and a heap of notes besides, lying in front of him. When next Theodore had to buy counters, he coolly said:

"But can't these twenty-five crowns come off your debt to the store?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Baardsen.

There was no falling out on that score. It was not exactly nice of Theodore, perhaps, to get himself repaid in this way, but the telegraphist's behaviour throughout the evening had been still stranger: he owed the young merchant money, yet treated him more than haughtily, treated him scornfully, didn't see him. And his creditor did not retaliate, but put up with it. Here again Baardsen—that devil of a fellow, that villain—had an object, maybe, and could have given a long and reasoned explanation. But no one asked for it. The game went on. Theodore bought counters again and said:

"Shall we say that these five and twenty are to come off too?"

"Yes!" said Baardsen.

"I don't remember how much it is you owe, but if you pay too much, we will square it up to-morrow."

"Yes!" said Baardsen.

Then the engineer laid down his cards and said:

"No, we'll not get even with the winner to-night; let us stop. Let us settle up!"

Each one redeemed his counters, drank out his glass, and talked. The telegraphist sat there, handling his notes—at last he stuck them into his pocket without counting them. Was he showing off before the others, thinking to be eccentric? Then he might have thought of something better—all poor devils handle money carelessly; that is why they are poor. No one is so reckless as the tramp. A note lay on the floor; the engineer picked it up, threw it on the table and said:

"That's sure to be one of yours too."

"Thanks," said Baardsen, and thrust it in with the others.

The engineer threw himself unasked upon the concertina and began to play a march with a resounding bass. He went at it with a will; he worked hard at the bellows, making faces and panting with the exertion. Then he stopped abruptly and laughed a great laugh. "Try that, one of you!" he said. They begged him to go on and he began again.

And now for some reason—probably because the sounds were carried ashore and heard by those who were taking an evening walk—a number of people came down to the quay; some young folk climbed on board the steamer, and the gentlemen in the saloon heard feet trip, tripping above their heads. They were dancing on the deck.

That suited all the gentlemen very well for a time, but Theodore soon left and went home. The drink, the music and the dancing had made him mournful again, maybe, and reminded him that he was in love.

When Baardsen went ashore he heard, in an alley near Herr Holmengraa's big grain-wharf, the voices of a pair of lovers quarrelling: the lad was complaining loudly that he had heard a lot about her, that she was a miserable, faithless wretch when he was away; and the girl wept and denied it all. There was talk of money; that she had a hundred crowns; the youth scoffed—thank you, he didn't need it—he had saved three months' wages. "Do as you like!" said the girl. "Just you go home again," answered the lad, coming out of the alley. It was Nils of Vælta with the yellow silk handkerchief fluttering about his neck. He did not turn again, but went. The girl came out too—Florina, Solicitor Rasch's maid—with a big woollen shawl over her mouth and cheeks. She pulled it aside when she spoke and put it back when she was done. Away went her sweetheart and did not turn. "Nils!" said she. He did not answer. All at once she shouted: "I'm going straight on board now to dance; you see if I don't!" "You can if you like!" answered he. For a good while she still stood and looked after the youth; Baardsen came by, but she did

not heed him, she was nothing but two big eyes peering out of a shawl. Then she crossed the quay and went on board the ship.

It was quiet in the narrow lanes between the houses, the little town had gone to rest, the swans were trumpeting far away; Baardsen turned his steps inland and walked on behind Nils of Vælta. A resolute fellow, this lover—a strong chap; he did not turn once. Strong? To be sure—twenty years or so old, and three months' wages in his pocket. But, when Baardsen had followed him for a quarter of an hour, keeping his distance, he thought suddenly: what if he hears my footsteps all the time and thinks they are his sweetheart's? "Ahem!" says the telegraphist aloud. Does the lad go on? No, he turns, taken by surprise, takes a few more steps forward for appearance' sake, and then stops. The strong fellow has all at once grown weak. He actually begins to fumble about himself for something, begins to feel in his pockets for something—what was he seeking? Ah! it was only make-believe; he made a show of having lost something, just to have an excuse for turning back. Then he comes towards the telegraphist and smiles lamely as he goes by, smiles like a beggar-boy: "I've forgotten—could you believe it——!" Then he strides hastily down to the wharf again. But he fumbles in his pockets still to keep up the pretence.

The steamer is putting out from the wharf and swinging gaily out to sea. Nils of Vælta stops short and gazes crest-fallen before him for a moment. Then he dashes down towards the quay as if he would overtake the fleeing ship. The swans are still trumpeting far away.

Baardsen rolls on, far into the country, to Nils the shoemaker's cottage, which he passes, to small farms, homesteads, clearings. Here and there sheep are in the open already, though the ground is not yet clear of snow. He turns back and goes into Nils the shoemaker's cottage.

"I saw your chimney was smoking, so I knew you were still up," he said. Nils, very much flurried, dusts both a

stool and a chair for the visitor. On the table lie a herring and some potatoes in a big piece of paper.

"Yes," says Nils, "I am making coffee; I am just back from the town and was going to make coffee—I'm such a one for coffee." Fancy the telegraph-superintendent coming to such a house; there is hardly room to sit down in! Nils clears the table and bundles the herring and potatoes on to the bed, chattering confusedly all the time: "Yes, I expect the chimney was smoking. I was going to make coffee—I'm such a fellow for coffee! Now, if only I could have offered Herr Baardsen a cup to-night, but—— For I'm sure it is not fit——"

"Yes, thanks," said Baardsen.

Great agitation: "Are you serious? Good Lord! if only it is fit, but—— And nothing to put in it—and just out of sugar too—forgot it down at the shop this evening. And, worst of all, the coffee was left behind too—the bag of coffee—left on the counter. It's dreadful how short my memory has grown," said Nils the shoemaker.

"Whose portrait is that?" asked Baardsen, though he knew quite well. It was the son, U. Nelson, in America, dressed up, well fed, and spruce, the Ulrik of former days.

"And the lady?" asks Baardsen.

"Well, that's a great secret still," answers Nils, "but as far as I understand, she's the one he's going to marry. Who would have believed it, little Ulrik, who went about with me making boots! And his hands were only so big when he began! But now! He's grown a fine fellow! Oh, yes, there's no doubt about that!"

Then Baardsen seemed suddenly to grow drunk, stuck his hat on and said rudely:

"Take away that beastly cup, that's not coffee, I won't drink such stuff. What was I going to say?—here, take these notes and be off to America. Hush! let me have my say out: these notes. Get off to America, you too, I said. Can't you keep quiet till I'm done speaking? Get yourself a ticket and go. The notes are yours. I won't stay here and

listen to your gabble any longer. Take yourself off, do you hear——"

Baardsen had got himself outside and was repeating the same words, while Nils followed him with the notes in his hands, making objections. The last the telegraphist heard was the insane question: "Couldn't I even go with you and carry something for you?" The old skeleton of a shoemaker—carry something for Baardsen with his gigantic swinging shoulders!

On his way home Baardsen sees the little steamboat again, inward-bound this time. It had been a short way out to sea, had taken a little pleasure-trip with some of the natives, some of the young people who had danced on the deck in the cool of the night.

When Baardsen entered the telegraph-station, little Gottfred was sitting, telegraphing. Little Gottfred Bertelsen, son of Bertel of Sagvika, was sitting, sending the last part of an enormously long telegram to Didriksen & Hybrecht; their representative, the young Herr Didriksen, had asked that the station might be kept open for the sake of this telegram, it had to do with a big transaction, the whole of Theodore of Bua's order. Ah, young Didriksen! it was a great advertisement, this keeping open of the station, and it did not cost much—it was a cunning dodge he was in the habit of using with customers he wished to flatter and to honour.

Little Gottfred was finished; he turned round and said:

"There are great stories abroad of your luck to-night."

Baardsen stared.

"Theodore was in here on his way home; he said you won a tremendous lot."

"Yes, indeed," said Baardsen, "that's true. It must have been fate."

"I'm very glad," said little Gottfred.

"But I shouldn't call it such a tremendous lot, when one takes off what I had to pay up. But it was something, I did win a bit. Don't you think it was fate?"

"About how much was it?"

"Oh, it really wasn't much. Have you been working the whole evening, poor chap?"

"I am so glad about your winnings for your own sake. For the Inspector may be here any day. And this time you wouldn't get off, you know."

"Hang it all, can't you understand it was nothing to speak of, when what I had to pay up is taken off?" cried Baardsen impatiently.

"Pay up? What had you to pay up?"

"Hadn't we to settle up? Besides, an odd note falls on the floor, a counter flies here, and another there, everything has to be squared. But you don't play cards, of course."

Little Gottfred looked down and pondered.

"Yes, but you can put the cash right at least?" he said.

"Oh, yes, oh, yes. But you're tired now. And besides, it's my cash, not yours. The worst of it is that you have been sitting here half the night while I've been having fun."

Fearful forebodings arise in little Gottfred; he knows Baardsen's careless handling of money from bygone happenings, and cannot help saying:

"The worst will be if you can't square the cash straight away. You known what the result will be."

"You'll become telegraph-superintendent in my place, Gottfred, my boy. And then I'll get your place, maybe."

"Don't joke about it," answered Gottfred. "See, here is the account. Now make up your cash-shortage."

Baardsen took a stride over towards his 'cello in the corner, and said nothing.

"Won't you?" asked Gottfred.

Then Baardsen cried:

"Won't you! Won't you! Look here: I can't! Is that clear enough? What are you standing there making a fuss about?"

"Can you not?"

"No. I have nothing. Come here and search for your-

self. See here, I've nothing, my pockets are empty, there's no money."

"Then you've given it to someone."

"Yes, then I've given it to someone, of course. Stuff and nonsense!"

Gottfred looked at the floor again and thought.

"I'm sorry for you!" said he.

Baardsen was offended, and said:

"I don't understand—you think you have got the right to be pitying me always——"

"Who got the money?"

"Devil take you, man!" shouted Baardsen. "Got it? Nils the shoemaker has borrowed it. He's going to America. To his son. Nils the shoemaker. Ugh! everyone seems to be going mad!"

Little Gottfred made up his mind at once, gave him loud and solemn warning that he was going now to get some of the money back, put his hat on and left the office. Baardsen looked after him open-mouthed, made as if to call out; then, seeing it was too late, said nothing. A little later he sat down to play his 'cello, drunken and irresponsible.

IV

THE mail-boat had left an enormous grand piano on the wharf, and Martin, from the Manor, and five other men were pushing and lifting the heavy case on to the sledge so as to get it away before the snow disappeared. The grand piano was for Young Willatz, the owner of Segelfoss; he had not come himself and there was no word from him. Whither was the piano to be taken—to Segelfoss Manor or to the two rooms in the tile-works? Martin and the five men were puzzling over this; they sent a messenger up to Fru Solicitor Rasch to ask her, and she

answered that the piano should go to Segelfoss Manor of course, to young Herr Holmsen's own rooms at Segelfoss Castle—where else should it go? And the Messenger thanked her for these instructions and turned to go. But he had not gone many steps before Fru Rasch called after him; no! they had better take it to the tile-works, perhaps. Goodness knows! but it could not stand there either; not in both the rooms at once—no, she did not know, she could not venture to decide anything. Fru Rasch was quite upset and distracted.

The messenger came down to the wharf, and Martin and the five men cudgelled their brains again.

Herr Holmengraa went up to them and said:

"Put the case into my warehouse on the wharf till Young Willatz comes."

That would settle the question. And one of the men nodded approvingly and said: "That's not a bad idea!" "No—o," put in another, "but then the snow will go, and how are you going to get that heavy piano over the bare ground?" "Now then, take hold and don't stand there talking, when the mill-owner has told you what to do!" commanded Martin. But the mill-owner had not Martin always at hand, and then the same men could discuss his orders with the greatest freedom. The mill-owner was beginning to get tired of his work, of his workmen, of his position. King of Segelfoss now! It was nearly as bad as being a real king and giving audience to this and that polar explorer, and the rest of the time sitting and signing the decrees of the majority of the country's rabble. Herr Holmengraa was glad that a Willatz Holmsen was coming back; when he heard the first rumour of it, it sent a thrill of pleasure through him, a strange feeling, a reminder of the former Holmsens and the fine times when it was vulgar to dangle a thick gold chain on one's waistcoat. God knows what it was to him—a greeting to a lonely man, something to lean upon; at last some human being worth caring about again.

Whom else had he? No one. Solicitor Rasch? He had gone about threadbare till he could afford to buy himself clothes, and when he had got clothes he treated himself to a belly and a double chin; and after that he had no wish for anything but to make money. District-doctor Muus? A man of no particular ability, and so cold-blooded besides. He had read his books and believed them. He was the sort of man who did not bow first when he met one—very good; Herr Holmengraa bowed first; he gave out his views on men and on the world, on life and death—very good; Herr Holmengraa had nothing to say on these subjects. But almost the worst of all was the District-doctor's appearance; his degeneracy; the low skull with the one or two hairs laid across it; his short-sightedness; his big misshapen ears. A changeling must once have strayed into his family, been buried in the last century, but come to life in him again.

When both came to Herr Holmengraa's house—the doctor entered first, because he insisted on his right of precedence, and the solicitor last, because he could not see that he lost anything thereby—when these two showed Herr Holmengraa the courtesy of paying him a visit of a Sunday evening, they were always made welcome and royally entertained, and often did not leave the house till late at night.

Herr Holmengraa himself would seem cheered. "It is very kind of you, gentlemen, to remember my existence," he would say. His housekeeper, Fru Irgens, *née* Geelmuyden, would seize the chance to cook and bake for a banquet; veal and fowls in heavenly sauces were set on the table, cakes and sweet preserves for the doctor, wonderful pastries and jellies. If Fröken Mariane was home from one of her trips to Christiania or abroad, she would join them and drink a glass with them. She was so very young and merry, and such an unusual type too; a mestizo from Mexico, Indian in feature, with a gliding gait, a mixture of good and bad—at times a thorough troll. Doctor Muus

had actually tried to court this mere child the year before, and everything went swimmingly. He was only flesh and blood, he said, and as by good luck he could offer her a position and a respected name, he would do it now. She looked at him very oddly with glittering Indian eyes. "Do you think we should marry?" said she. Yes, that was what he meant. "Marry one another?" said she. He did not see any impossibility. It was true there was some disparity of age, but he had a position and a family-name—they ought to be reckoned as some little make-weight; he hinted even that his looks could not be called forbidding. After that both said nothing for a time. "But do you really want me?" said she, quite equal to the occasion. "I have thought it over," he answered. "Unfortunately, I am not quite sure that the whole of my family are at one with me in the matter, but in the last resort it depends on me alone, of course, and I have made up my mind!" Then she begged a delay of a few years so that they might be quite clear in their minds about it—five years or so, she said, so that there might not be the least chance of a mistake; "it ought to be eight years, really." But at the idea of eight years he shook his head, that would be quite too endlessly long. "Eight years! Oh, come now," said he. "you must allow that's an exaggeration! But I appreciate the fact that you wish to give both yourself and me time to think it over."

"The matter is a little complicated," said Fröken Mariane. "My mother had Indian blood in her, and I don't know whether I am quite set free from my tribe in Mexico. If I should need to make your offer known to my tribe, they are always on the move and it might take five years to find them." Doctor Muus was frankly contemptuous of this idea; he did not see the need of mixing a Mexican-Indian tribe in the question; but Fröken Mariane thereupon explained to him with deep mystery: The tribe had its laws; outrage them not! The tribe would be revenged; that was what they had their poisoned daggers for. Even if their revenge could not reach as far as Segelfoss, there

was her brother, Felix, in Mexico—he was a sailor, on a coasting-vessel, he would be struck down without fail. When the doctor had considered this a little, he said firmly: "Well, that tribe of yours and my family can have nothing to do with one another. You must excuse me saying so!" Mariane bent her head. "But all the same we shall be just good friends," said Doctor Muus. "I hope so!" answered the young lady, and slipped quickly from the room to recover from the shock.

Besides the doctor and the solicitor, Herr Holmengraa saw the sheriff of Ura at rare intervals. He was an amiable old man, who gave no trouble; Fröken Mariane would sit long hours talking to him, and Herr Holmengraa himself liked to ask him to the house, not because he either said or did anything remarkable, but because of his friendliness and his beautiful grey hair. He was an Uncle Bræsig without the glib tongue. "Come again very soon!" Fröken Mariane would say. "Thanks!" was all the sheriff answered, but he stood bare-headed in the hall and did not put his hat on until she had gone.

There was a good deal in the pastor; he understood turning, joinery and blacksmithing. He did not try to guide his congregation in deep, spiritual things, as Lars Manuelsen's great son, L. Lassen, had done during his curacy. But the present pastor—what a square peg in a round hole! He could do anything with his hands—he could plait osier baskets—he had even made his own driving-sledge. In this case he had proved an inventor as well and made the whole body of old sacks which he covered with plaster and moulded to his liking. When the whole had set, he went over it with a trowel, and when it was dry he rubbed it down with pumice-stone and made it fine and smooth. To finish up with, he gave the body three coats of enamel, and it was done. It was like driving in a light and wonderful carriage made of glass. And on the strength of this feat he was elected chairman of the parish-council.

The pastor's name was Landmarck; he had been in the

place for five years now, and was the first pastor since Segelfoss had become a separate parish. His wife was from a small town in the south—all pastors' wives are from small towns in the south; they are the daughters of a custom-house officer, a ship's captain, or a rate-collector of the small town; they get their husband when he comes as teacher to the town school. That's what happens with all of them, that's the way it had happened with Fru Landmarck. She was the daughter of the chief constable and was from a poor home and one of many children. She married the teacher and herself had children; but when the children began to multiply, the teacher, though he could not preach, had to look out for a living up in the north. So it goes with all theologians, so it had gone with Pastor Landmarck. Now, indeed, he had a permanent post as shepherd of souls, though he had no turn that way—a foolish and a tiresome way of making a living for a man that could use his hands. He put up both a smithy and a workshop at the parsonage and spent his happiest hours in the midst of shavings and the smell of the forge. Things were not so very bad; they might have been worse—Pastor Landmarck found life bearable. But his wife, *née* Post, had never dreamt of having to lead such a life—such a miserable existence in the home of an official—it was not much better than if she had married an artisan. It had happened that her husband had made a wheel for a barrow or sharpened a crow-bar for a neighbour and had been offered payment for it; and once he had made a little child's coffin. It was all very well to be helpful to folk who needed help, but where was one to draw the line, and how keep intrusive folk at a distance? His wife said—and this was true—that she was not brought up to mix with all the neighbours' wives who forced their way into her kitchen asking for all sorts of things, and she would not have them there either—no, go home again, Oline, go home, Mattea and Lisbet! Her husband's passion for working with his hands was to blame for all this—it was an affliction for the whole

family, and she said—which was also true—that in any case it was a costly amusement to build a smithy and a workshop on a parsonage which one left as soon as one's years in the Nordland were up. Could one take a house with one—a smithy? Thank God! four years were over, in another four they could ask for a move, a change southward—for choice to the little country-town, but southward anyway, and then the workshop must stay behind! A dear joke, several hundred crowns, which would be of no use to anyone but the next pastor at Segelfoss.

The people from the parsonage had been at Herr Holmengraa's twice altogether in these four years—once to pay their first call, and once besides. And this second time things did not go very well. Herr Holmengraa took the pastor up to the mill with him to see the machines and the gear, and the pastor's wife was left alone with Fru Irgens, *née* Geelmuyden. No, they did not get on very well; both ladies were rather on their dignity, and probably the one found no reason for giving way to the other. Talking of flowers, for instance—Fru Landmarck was accustomed to quite different flowers in the south, in the home of her childhood; but she did not say so straight out, she merely hinted that an aralia grew out of doors where she was born. Fru Irgens tossed her head. Then there were the windows—Fru Landmarck had her maids cleaning the panes again and again every single morning over there at the parsonage, but it was the fault of the glass, it was hard to get good window-glass here in the north. Fru Irgens observed that she had seen clear window-glass in the Nordland too, but when the pastor's wife incautiously asked "Where?" Fru Irgens answered: "I think the windows here are pretty good, for example." Then Fru Landmarck smiled and said: "Ah, but you haven't seen the windows down south, Fru Irgens!" On this there followed a tense silence. Then Fru Landmarck said: "Don't for any sake misunderstand me; it's not your fault, it's the fault of the glass!" "No, if there's anything wrong with the windows here, it

must be my fault," answered Fru Irgens. "The glass is good enough; Herr Holmengraa is the kind of man to have plate-glass in his windows." The lady from the parsonage asked incredulously: "Is that plate-glass? You don't suppose it is plate-glass only because it is one big pane?" "No, but because it *is* plate-glass," replied Fru Irgens. Indeed! the passage at arms might have gone further yet, for Fru Irgens, *née* Geelmuyden, was a little red in the face by now, but Fru Landmarck, being a parson's wife, was prepared to be complaisant and yield the point. Not that she really gave in—far from it; she talked of other things, of servant-girls and silver-plate and spring cleaning, but she did not forget the windows. Was she to let a Nordland lady make her believe anything? She stopped in front of the furthest-off pane of glass in the room and said: "Now, really! dear Fru Irgens, can this be plate-glass with such scratches?" Fru Irgens drew near. "Those scratches, do you know what they are?" said she. "They are signatures which some people here wrote with their diamond rings." At that Fru Landmarck looked at Fru Irgens—looked at her long. Were these cock-and-bull stories to get taller and taller, and was she to swallow them? "Diamond rings," said Fru Landmarck, "aren't they rare and costly things? Are you quite sure of what you are saying, Fru Irgens?" Fru Irgens was deeply offended now; she pointed out that she was an Irgens. To which Fru Landmarck answered that she was *née* Post, but it was not her habit for that reason to bring diamonds into her conversation simply to show off. "But, good God! it was the foreign captains who wrote on the window!" shrieked Fru Irgens. "They wrote when they were here with grain cargoes, took a ring from a finger and wrote. It seems to me you wish to make me out a liar, Fru Landmarck!" And now Fru Irgens had tears in her eyes and her cheeks had grown pale. "My dear lady!" burst out the parson's wife; "I will do everything I can to pacify you, indeed I will, and I will not contradict you again, since you cannot stand it. You must

forgive me, I have not heard of diamonds up in the north here, it is different with us down in the south. But, if you say that it was foreign captains who wrote on the glass, then it is possibly true. No, dear Fru Irgens, really I have no wish to make you out a liar!" "Herr Holmengraa was quite angry over these scratches on the window when he saw them," went on Fru Irgens, unwilling to be pacified so easily. "And for fun he begged Fröken Mariane not to make scratches with her diamond rings—it was not a nice thing to do, he said, and Fröken Mariane answered, laughing, that she had never thought of making scratches. But Fröken Mariane has three or four costly diamond rings she could make scratches with!" "Indeed!" said Fru Landmarck, just so as not to contradict Fru Irgens. But Fru Irgens was put out again none the less, for in a questioning tone she repeated this "Indeed." "I am not saying it is I who have them, for I haven't. Not that I have no jewels at all, for Irgens made me a gift of a very costly set of Bohemian garnets, and it has both bracelets and rings and ear-rings and necklace, and a diadem for the hair. I believe he said it cost many hundreds of crowns." "I don't doubt it," answered the pastor's wife, complaisant again in her own way. "Judging by our slight knowledge of Bohemian garnets in the south, they would cost a thousand crowns perhaps; why say some hundred, then, Fru Irgens? But there are some people who think it grander to say sixty minutes rather than an hour. I, for my part, have never been able to understand why!"

The gentlemen came home from the mill and separated the ladies. But the pastor's wife declared on the way home that she would never set foot in Herr Holmengraa's house again. She owed that to her self-respect.

And up to now she had kept her word.

So there was only the telegraphist Baardsen left—and he did not call on people; Herr Holmengraa met him on the roads only and at the telegraph office. They always spoke briefly and politely to one another, these two men, and that

was all; they had no everyday intercourse. But when Herr Holmengraa had been at Segelfoss for ten years and had a sort of jubilee, the telegraph-superintendent hoisted the government flag—what did he mean by that? He never flagged as a rule save according to the regulations. In the evening he was asked to the mill-owner's, but he sent his thanks and declined on the score of extra duty. Little Gottfred, his colleague at the station, said Baardsen hadn't any clothes.

On the whole, then, Herr Holmengraa's life at Segelfoss had become very dull and cheerless, without anyone to make friends with and to talk to. There was nothing in his business to enliven him either; the workmen grumbled, and the mill ground with small profit at times. He had had to raise his prices twice; the *Segelfoss News* had taken him to task the last time and insisted that he was exploiting the populace.

Ah, the mill-owner's was often no happy lot! Now and then a speculation of his would go wrong, too; the grain harvest in India turned out better than expected, and he had bought at too high a price; when that leaked out, the *Segelfoss News* gave out that the mill-owner had met with a heavy loss, but it served him right, one should not speculate on the sufferings of India. "Down with capital!" The position became extremely unpleasant—besides having to bear the losses, the mill-owner saw himself forced to make explanations, to boast: thank God, he could stand on his own feet still—he had his daily bread—ha, ha! And at his jubilee, to stop the talk, he went the length of giving five thousand crowns to a fund for his workmen.—Thereupon the *Segelfoss News* wrote: "At last a small repayment out of the riches heaped up for a single man by the sweat of the workers! Hearken to the truth, workmen!"

And these five thousand crowns—what a sad comedy they gave rise to! The workmen started a bank with them, a workmen's bank, the Segelfoss Loan and Savings Bank, and the solicitor and two other men became directors. They

made loans for several weeks—everyone got loans—mortgaged their cottages, their homes and their stock, and borrowed. What Jens got, Jakob must have—it was quite a little epidemic—the one stood surety for the other. Theodore of Bua did a large cash trade in those days, selling dress-stuffs and watch-chains and fine cheese. At length there was no money in the Segelfoss Loan and Savings Bank—the directors scraped the bottom of the safe for their fees. They looked at one another. What now? They were at a full stop.

Then it was Lawyer Rasch's turn. "If I am given a free hand, I'll save the Bank," said he. He was given a free hand, he was left sole director with doubled fees.

And now came the harvesting, and Lawyer Rasch made good money; he cited before the court, distrained and auctioned. Theodore of Bua bought a lot of cattle which he sent south by the mail-boat and the solicitor bought in a lot of cottages, for which the former owners had to pay rent afterwards. What an upheaval it was, a regular earthquake! Why, bless you, no one has ever seen such widespread results from a kind gift of five thousand crowns!

And the Bank stood firm. It was a miracle, but the Bank pulled through gallantly in the day of need. How was it done? No one doubted that it owed its salvation to Lawyer Rasch. Had not this man of iron acted with such lightning speed and such shrewdness, all would have been lost. He sent out thirty summonses on the same day and overwhelmed Segelfoss, struck terror into the place; people did not even get a chance to pull themselves together and turn swindlers and mortgage themselves body and soul and all to a kinsman or a friend, and so cheat the Bank. The people yielded with a groan—they were children, they were beasts for the slaughter. But Lawyer Rasch made a good thing out of it; and the workmen themselves? The majority were content. It was the heads of families, with cottages and homes and cattle, who were hit; they had not only borrowed themselves, but had gone surety for others, for the day-labourers, the

great majority—it was a heavy blow for these fathers of families, but the majority held that none were better able to bear the blow than this very "propertied class" among the workers—they had aped the capitalists and accumulated wealth; they had gone astray. Some lively meetings were held about it. Workman Aslak spoke, day-labourer Konrad spoke, and the *Segelfoss News* called on the mill-owner to attend and hear the speeches.

Herr Holmengraa was going about in a thick jacket with flour-dust on his boots, and he did not attend; but he got little pleasure out of his charitable action. No, he did not attend the meeting; but do you think that ended the matter? They took the liberty of sending him a message from the meeting, and so he had to send back word that he was busy and could not come. It was a parley as between equals.

Was this the kind of life for the miracle-worker, for King Tobias, from the land of fable and gold? There was never a catastrophe, never a crash, but a thousand small worries. He had nothing big to struggle against, nothing that could crush him, only a swarm of trifles to sting and torment him. It would have been better for him if he had remained the millionaire of the Cordilleras about whom fabulous tales came home.

No! there was no disguising the fact that people were beginning to doubt Herr Holmengraa's riches; and if he were not rich, he was nothing. Why in the world should a rich man run a flour-mill at Segelfoss and not even get fat and wear furs? Look at Lawyer Rasch, he had become fairly rich, and you could see it on him! Herr Holmengraa would do best to change his ways and not make himself out less than he was. Couldn't he revive the glorious days when he arose from the haze of myth with the matchless splendour of a sunrise? Ah, God! What days! He ought to be able to make something further out of the fairy-tale; he was thinking it over, perhaps; it may have been a slight essay that took him to the city and brought him back a freemason. If only it will succeed! he ponders, per-

haps. If only I can win back respect! he thinks, no doubt.

He is happy to-day and full of hope. When Young Willatz comes he will have a human being to associate with again for the first time for many years—it was a blessing to look forward to—he felt as one does the day after a happy stroke of fortune.

Herr Holmengraa goes into the store. He is seldom, almost never there, and Theodore throws open the flap for the great man. He may well do it—it was Herr Holmengraa who established the whole store on his land and helped old Per on his way to become P. Jensen. The mill-owner is good nature itself to these folk of the store and never asks for ground-rent. He is a far-off, a very far-off kinsman of Theodore's mother, and is quite pleased that Theodore should have become a smart lad who does a little trading for a livelihood. But he himself did not buy anything there, he got everything from the big towns.

"Won't you step inside?" says Theodore.

Herr Holmengraa smiles. This "step inside" the counter was the trader's way of paying a compliment to a customer —that was all very well for Segelfoss folk, but with a King it was another matter.

"Your father lies abed still?" asks the mill-owner. "Then you must speak to him yourself about it: I see you are cleaning fish from the sloop again and laying them out on rocks. This is the seventh year."

Theodore is confused and says:

"Aren't they Willatz's rocks?"

"You mean Herr Holmsen's rocks? Yes, they are. It would not matter so much if they had been mine. I think you'll have to pay him ground-rent for all these years."

Theodore is a smart lad, and answers:

"Willatz—Holmsen has been home once since we began to dry fish on his rocks, but he has never said a word about rent."

"Quite right!" nods the King. "But for that very reason it seems to me you ought to pay him now."

"I'll have a talk with Father about it."

"Good. Tell your father that I want you to pay the rent."

Theodore has been undecided, most likely, but now he makes up his mind to tell the truth; perhaps he wishes to make the greatest possible impression on the mill-owner, on the King, for some reason or other. He says:

"Yes, but, as a matter of fact, the cargo of fish and the sloop are mine, and do not belong to our firm."

Herr Holmengraa knew this already, maybe, and only wished to bring the young man down a peg. This is quite likely, for he is never anything but kindly and fatherly to all the people of the store.

"Are the fish yours, Theodore?" he asks. "If that's so, then a clever chap like you knows that he ought to pay ground-rent. We need say no more about it."

But Theodore, no doubt wishing to make a still better impression, says:

"The bakery which has passed into our hands stands on your ground, I rather think."

"Yes, but that's no matter."

"We will pay you the ground-rent."

"Are trade and everything going well?" asks Herr Holmengraa.

"Yes, we can't complain."

Herr Holmengraa nods and goes.

It was pleasant to play something of a part again, to have something to say, something to call attention to; it had not happened too often these last years. Spring was beginning to stir his blood once more, no doubt; each year in March he was used to mark a change in himself—he took longer strides as he walked along the roads, and he spoke with greater decision. Spring could play him tiresome tricks, too; a cross was laid upon him—youth. Youth took possession of him, with foolish, tiresome consequences.

He meets a man driving along the road; the man touches his hat, says good day and that he is Marcilie's father.

"Well!" answers Herr Holmengraa.

"Father to Marcilie, who is working for you again," says the man.

"Oh! Well!"

"Her child is a big boy now and can go on ski."

"Oh! Indeed!"

"But he hasn't any ski."

Herr Holmengraa takes out his pocket-book and finds a note. "See here, buy him a ski! What does he want with ski now, close on spring?"

"That's the very thing I've been telling him all winter, but he goes on crying for ski. And besides, we up on the mountain have snow till midsummer day."

"Good, buy him ski, then! Marcilie is a good girl, let her boy have ski."

"I knew," said the man, "I had only to speak of it, sir, and you would not let the child go on crying. And now let me thank you heartily for the money on his behalf! Can't I give you a lift?" the man shouted after Herr Holmengraa.

"Give me a lift?"

"Turn round and drive you home? I'll do it more than gladly, if you don't mind driving in a wood-sledge."

And the man turned the horse.

"Drive on!" Herr Holmengraa shouted back, as he walked away and left him.

Yes, to be sure, one got mixed up in foolish affairs; that was inevitable. What was one to do? Here, now, was a man offering to drive him home on a wood-sledge as if he were of the Segelfoss gentry—as if he were the solicitor or little Theodore of Bua. No! something must be done; no one showed him respect even, when really they ought to stand in awe of him.

Ah! but that cunning fellow, Marcilie's father, and grandfather of Marcilie's child, had his reasons for wishing to drive the mill-owner, no doubt; for wishing to sit on his sledge beside the mill-owner and let the whole Segelfoss world see them.

Suddenly he hears someone shouting in front of him; he looks up and sees a man waving his arms. It is Konrad, the day-labourer; he is coming down the road from the mill.

Herr Holmengraa cannot but think something serious has happened; he hardly waits till he has come within hearing before he asks:

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," answers Konrad. "I was only calling to the man yonder with the horse, so that he should give me a lift."

Herr Holmengraa does not seem to understand. "Where are you going?" he asks.

"Oh, I'm just going down to the store for a bit. We've run out of tobacco up there."

A quiver passed over Herr Holmengraa's face, as though a whip-lash had struck him—for an instant only, then it was over.

"You can't give me a plug, can you?" asked Konrad.

At that moment, perhaps, Herr Holmengraa longed to have the strength of his sailor youth given back to him. It is hard to be an old man—Herr Holmengraa was helpless. He mastered himself enough to say:

"The two hundred sacks are to be filled this afternoon. Do you understand?"

It is possible that Konrad did really understand, but it didn't make much impression upon him—it did not trouble him. He took out a handkerchief and began to blow his nose while he coolly passed his master.

Herr Holmengraa was afraid he had been over-hasty, perhaps, and that something unpleasant might happen—he was an old man; he said mildly: "You needn't begin till you've had your dinner. Have you had dinner?"

"Have I had dinner?" asked Konrad smiling. "Yes, many a time."

"I mean to-day. Dinner to-day?"

"You should have said that first."

Herr Holmengraa burst out:

"My God!—this is beyond everything! You don't stay at the mill a day longer!"

But Konrad had had notice to leave before; it was no great blow to him; God had given him such an excellent understanding that he knew he and his mates had the upper-hand. He turned and said:

"Now there's one thing I'll tell you, Tobias; an old man should not be so hasty. We are twenty to one, and none of us are slaves."

"But how many of us are there, do you think?" asked Herr Holmengraa, forgetting himself. "I'll show you—I'll teach you——"

"Ha, ha! you mean the freemasons?" shouted Konrad. "No one believes you're one!"

And on Konrad went. He got up beside the man with the horse and drove off to the store for tobacco.

Herr Holmengraa comes home and says to his housekeeper, Fru Irgens:

"I'm going south to-night with the mail-boat. Will you pack my bag? A few necessaries only, a shirt or two; I'll be back by the first north-bound steamer."

Fru Irgens was used to his going off now and then—he said it was for a meeting of the Lodge—she asks whether Fröken Mariane is going too, and Herr Holmengraa answers, no, she is not. He was going on a very important journey, he must be alone. "And so you must look after the house in the meantime, Fru Irgens!"

"Look after the house!" says Fru Irgens, dejectedly. "I am so worried, the key's gone and can't be found. I lie thinking of it at night."

"The key?"

"The storehouse key I told you of. We keep on searching for it but it can't be found."

"Well, that's not so very dreadful," says Herr Holmengraa, absent-mindedly.

But it was dreadful, indeed it was. Fru Irgens had no peace. This little key was nowhere to be found, it had

sunk into the ground, God had hidden it at slaughter-time in the autumn, at the time when there was great coming and going in the store-room. They had searched inside and out, had felt each other's pockets and asked everyone; the snow was thawing in the court-yard now, but no key was to be seen. It was no proper, big storehouse key either, with an elaborate bit; no, it was a paltry thing, a little piece of shiny nickel, flat as paper and hardly a full inch long, the key of a padlock, of a Yale lock—something to hang on one's watch-chain.

"And you can't get into the storehouse now?" says Herr Holmengraa carelessly.

"Oh, yes!" answers Fru Irgens, obliged to smile at such ignorance. "We've been going into the storehouse all winter, of course, we've been in and out all the time. But we have to go through the mangling-room. Thank God we've got the key to the mangling-room."

"So it is not so very dreadful," says Herr Holmengraa, thinking of other things.

But it *was* dreadful. Fru Irgens was afraid someone might find the storehouse key and let himself in and steal all sorts of things. In the storehouse there was meat and pork and fish and cheese and butter and jam, and cakes and rusks and everything you could think of. She begged Herr Holmengraa to buy a new lock now when he went to town, and Herr Holmengraa promised. "Then I'll keep the key on me night and day in future!" said Fru Irgens.

He had been lucky in his housekeeper; she had served him faithfully, and had done her best for his interests always all the years he had been at Segelfoss; whether his house was grand and fine enough to invite Young Willatz to was another matter. That was the question! The roller-blinds did not draw up properly; here and there all attempts to get them higher had been given up, they had stuck fast, hopelessly crooked. In the dining-room there was silver and cut glass enough on the sideboard, modern vases——things in *art nouveau*. A carved German clock, with cords

and weights, would not move now without an extra weight, so Fru Irgens had tied a stone to it with green embroidery-silk. It did not look well nor grand. The study could be made to look comfortable with a few skilful touches. Just at the moment it looked a little forlorn; the good Mariane had the bad habit of taking a number of books up to her room to read and forgetting to bring them down again; and this gave the bookcase a sadly deserted look.

Herr Holmengraa called his daughter down; he thumped on the table as he pointed out the books and the stone on the clock-weight and the crooked roller-blinds. And Mariane laughs, for her father is always so kind and full of fun, and she takes hold of his hair, and says she can't stand such long hair, and that he must have it cut while he is away on his trip.

"Yes. But, all the same, I'm not friends with you," says her father, looking fierce again. "A stone tied to the clock-weight! And has neither you nor Fru Irgens a straight eye? Don't you see how the blinds hang askew? And I'll tell you what you've got to do: Go and get the books!"

"Now, I'll tell you something," answered Mariane. "I'm all your children, and if you were a kind father you would help me bring the books down again."

"Very likely!" he jeered. "You monster! you Indian! you so-called Mariane!"

But he went with her, of course, and they had games together, in spite of his being an old man. That's the way they lived. At times he would try to sit stern and angry with her, and pretend not to hear what she said, and to harden his heart. But it always ended in her getting the better of him out and out.

Herr Holmengraa had her only, only Mariane. His son Felix had gone back to Mexico while he was yet a boy, and he was now a Mexican and a sailor—was master of a ship already. Things had gone well with him, as they had with his father in his time—fabulously well to be sure.

But now that Mariane was alone at home, she was her father's children, she said.

She was far from being a beauty, with her yellow skin and with her black hair growing low upon her forehead. About her nose there was something coarse—it turned up —yes, it was ugly and large. But there was much good in Mariane—bad and good, as in all human beings—but in her there was at times something sly, and at times something recklessly tender! Though she was so young, she was already a full-grown woman, and she had inherited so much from her Indian mother—her tall supple body and gliding gait—that she was a lovely creature. Look at her light-brown eyes!—there was nothing sweet in these either, but they were almond-shaped and glittered brightly. And look, too, at the large golden half-moons she has hung in her ears! —they were nothing less than barbaric; but Mariane was no ordinary Segelfoss girl in cloak and hat. Had she been, her father couldn't have had much pleasure in her. He himself was a gambler by nature, a circumnavigator—it was chance that had made him a business man. He couldn't teach his daughter housekeeping: he could be a cheery friend to her and a mystery!

In the evening Mariane went down to the quay with her father and saw him safely on board. There were many people on the wharf—some greeted them, some didn't; but one and all stood and craned their necks and stared curiously at the gentry.

When Mariane came ashore again, she did not stay joking with her father in everyone's hearing, but waved good-bye to him and went away.

"Here's a two-crown bit; who has lost it?" she said aloud, and pointed to it with her finger as she passed.

Theodore of Bua ran and picked it up from the quay, held it aloft and cried jokingly:

"Who is the owner of this pretty thing?"

No one came forward. Everyone felt in his pockets, but no one claimed the ownership. Lars Manuelsen mumbled

and felt his pockets busily as if the coin ought to be his.

Theodore said:

"No owner presents himself, the two crowns are yours, Fröken Holmengraa!"

"No," Mariane answered, moving away without another word.

"But it was you who found it!" Theodore cried after her in vain.

If it was Theodore of Bua himself who had dropped the coin that he might have a few words with her, then he had missed his mark. He was nearly having trouble about this piece of money, too, when he stuck it into his pocket, for Lars Manuelsen now felt sure it was his: he had had a two-crown piece, and look here, there was no two-crown piece in his purse now. But Theodore of Bua was not the man to give away money for nothing; he was one of those who stick to pennies.

"I'll keep it in the meantime," he said.

"Then, is it your two crowns?" asked Lars Manuelsen.

Theodore seemed to consider, he seemed to be in a fix. Did people think that he had been so set on getting Mariane to talk to him?

"It's not my two crowns," he said with decision. "But I'll keep it," said he.

And Lars Manuelsen mumbled crossly:

"Well, I'm not going to bandy words with you about a two-crown bit. I haven't come to that."

V

IT was in lively mood that the magpie began to collect twigs for her nest. "God has given the magpie this happy nature that we may look at her and be happy ourselves," old Katrina, mother of Pauline and little Gottfred, had always said.

When March came and the worst of the frosts were over, old Katrina would breathe on the window-pane and thaw away the ice and say: "Thank God! there'll soon be an end to this winter too; there's the magpie beginning to gather twigs."

But the magpie did not take twigs and twigs only; she carried off whatever bright thing she saw, and any odd piece of fat or wool. Her curiosity and covetousness were so very strong, and she took a fancy to the strangest things! What could she want with Lars Manuelsen's spectacles? She could not use them for reading sermons as did Lars Manuelsen himself; she had no need to see better than she did. Lars Manuelsen lost his spectacles on the way home from the hotel, and he knew just where he lost them, and he went back and looked for them, but the spectacles were gone. "It was that magpie," said Lars Manuelsen.

There went another magpie, she came from Herr Holmengraa's big house and she had something shiny in her beak—whatever it might be, it wasn't a twig and it wasn't straw. When she alighted on the fields, she looked like a twisted bit of cardboard. But the naughty magpie is white and black and handsome all the same—a real beauty. The black about her has a green metallic sheen. Even when she sits on the ground bobbing up and down with her body, she looks very fine and gives an air of brightness to everything around her. The magpie is alert, she must see with her back; at the least danger she takes flight; but when she has reached a safe place, she begins to chatter, she is so merry. If she gets hold of a cat or a dog, she will tease the life out of it and enjoy herself thoroughly. She seeks out the dwellings of men not because she likes them, but from motives of prudence, for protection from her enemies. Such is the magpie.

But men themselves are often her enemies.

"Can you make out what she has in her beak?" says Lars Manuelsen's wife.

"Drat that magpie!" answers Lars Manuelsen. She steals

all she sees, she took my spectacles. But just let her get her nest made and eggs in it, and young birds in the eggs, then I'll have something to say to her."

"Don't you touch her nest!" answers his wife.

Each spring there was the same wrangle; Lars Manuelsen wished to tear down the magpie's nest—the old nest in the birch-tree in front of his cottage, and his wife made a stand against it. Up to now his wife had won. Ah! she had good reasons; the magpie would be revenged, the magpie had helpers both over- and underground; the Lapps use the magpie as a messenger; the magpie is full of good and evil!

Lars Manuelsen would not listen to all this foolishness. "Shut up! Shoo! Be off with you!" he said to the magpie, waving his arms. In a trice the magpie has taken wing and flown up into the birch, she alights for a moment and then vanishes into the nest like a spirit. When she came out again, she had nothing bright in her beak, and she now proceeded to stare down at Lars Manuelsen and scold angrily at him. It was extraordinary—she seemed full of lusty venom. Aye, she hopped over on to another branch that she might the better pour scorn on Lars Manuelsen; she hopped to a third twig and turned her head sidewise and screamed down at him. But that was not to be borne, the magpie went too far; had Lars Manuelsen not been a reasonable man, he would have thrown an ax at her.

"Don't you try to frighten the magpie away, I tell you!" said his wife.

"I'll tell you just one thing," answers Lars Manuelsen weightily—Lars Manuelsen had taken to saying such a number of things weightily since he had become father to a great man and had got a wig and begun to earn money from the bagmen that came to the hotel. And, besides, Lars Manuelsen was freeholder of his own place, his little croft with two cows, and could now receive his great son when he came, and God knows whether his son might not think a magpie's nest was a mean thing to have on one's place. So Lars Manuelsen answers with weight: "Where

are those spectacles of mine?" he says. His wife did not know. "Ask the magpie!" says Lars Manuelsen. "And would you like to know something more?" he asks. "Have you seen any magpies' nests and crows' nests and that sort of stuff on any decent farm?" And his wife couldn't say she had. "Then you don't bother me with any more of your tales!" says Lars Manuelsen.

There were others who made ready for spring as well as the magpie—Lawyer Rasch, for instance. He had all the snow patches on his ground strewn with sand so as to make them melt quicker. Lawyer Rasch had turned his property into a garden and ornamental grounds in the last few years. Before then it was a poor meadow with grazing for perhaps two cows; now there was no pasture, but trees and bushes and plants grew all over it, so that it was a credit to the house and its owners and the whole of Segelfoss. Lawyer Rasch had done great things since he had got money into his hands. What should he want with grazing and cows? Besides, a dairymaid was a whole extra servant. He could buy milk at the Segelfoss Manor farm like all the rest—this talk about improving the land in Norway was all very fine, but it did not pay. He was beginning to see some great and visible results of his labours; he had planted Siberian acacias and American spruce, he had transplanted clumps of juniper and bracken and willow from the forest into his grounds and got them to thrive there, and there was something in the place that favoured the Siberian acacias in particular and made them shoot up and grow in a wood. Every time he came on a visit, District-doctor Muus used to wander round the lawyer's grounds and nod his appreciation of their grandeur. "If you go on in this way for a few years, you will have nightingales in your thickets yet!" he would say. District-doctor Muus must have meant this as a joke, for he was an educated man—quite a wonderful talker when he liked; but Lawyer Rasch only nodded, as much as to say that he was a man for whom nothing was impossible, not even nightingales. He had got people to

bring him conchs and other shells and rare stones, and of these he was going to make neat borders round the aster and the poppy-beds, just as the better kind of people did down south. Hops and Virginia creeper grew up over the south wall of his Swiss chalet year after year and almost reached the starling-boxes; from the gables and the dormer-window in the roof yawned dragon-heads, true to life, and with both teeth and tongues in their jaws. Then there was the grass lawn in the middle of the garden adorned by a little cement basin holding a couple of barrelfuls of water, and from it rose a pipe which threw a jet of water into the air. It had cost two hundred crowns to lay on the water from the big river, but cost did not come into question here. At the bottom of the garden stood the flagstaff with a silvered ball.

Lawyer Rasch had everything in this world for himself and his family as fine as his heart could desire. There was only one thing left: to inaugurate this garden and these grounds which had shot up from that two-cow meadow. Each year he had intended to hold this festival, but it had been put off and put off till the shrubberies were bigger; now he had made up his mind again to hold it this year. Had not life been good to him? It had been left to him to accept its gifts or leave them—he had accepted them. Life had bestowed good fortune upon him without conditions —unencumbered, as he himself would have said perhaps— he felt in duty bound to acknowledge the gift, to give a quittance—the festival should take place this year without fail.

There was a very great difference in every way between the young lawyer who had come thither poor and unmarried a number of years ago and who was set up in business by Herr Holmengraa, and the mighty Solicitor Rasch with money, presence and standing. There was a time when he hung up his couple of overcoats and hats in the lobby leading to the office, so that folk who sought the solicitor might think there were several clients inside with the chief.

So they would sit awhile in the outer room and wait and hear talking from within; or, best of all, they would hear the chief open a door into the lobby and follow his clients out and dismiss them genially: "Good-bye! good-bye! Yes, we'll put the matter all right yet, depend upon it!" Then the solicitor would come into the outer room and give another good-humoured greeting: "Good day! good day! Excuse my having kept you so long, I was engaged!"

Lawyer Rasch's time was *really* taken up now, his hands were full, he was manager of the bank, and he had, on the quiet, some hand in the editing of the *Segelfoss News* too. It was not so easy to get into his inner office now either; you had to be announced: a clerk would knock at his door and ask whether the solicitor could see you. "Soon!" the solicitor might answer. "In a moment!" he might say. "Who is it? Lars Manuelsen? Ask Manuelsen to wait a second!"

The solicitor did nothing in this second, he wrinkled his brows and thought. Then he opened his door and said: "Good day, good day, Manuelsen! Come in! Have you waited long?"

"No."

Lars Manuelsen looks as though he has all the cards in his hands, and that is why he had not waited long. He didn't need to do that. And the solicitor treated him accordingly.

"Sit down, Manuelsen. Have you heard from your son lately?"

"Oh, no, not for a good long time."

"He's so busy at the capital, preaching and writing."

"That must be it."

"His learned investigations awaken great interest. His works are being translated into Swedish now, I see."

"Oh! into the Swedish tongue?"

"Into the Swedish tongue. Yes, he's a great man. He'll be a bishop yet, without doubt."

"Do you say so?"

"Without doubt."

"He sends nothing home," says the great man's father.

"Doesn't he? That surprises me a little; he must have forgotten."

"He ought to have had time to think of it by now."

"That's to say, no doubt, he puts it off and off—he never gets even with his work. I know how it is myself."

"As far as that goes, it would not take long to write a cheque for five or ten crowns."

"But think how busy he must be, Manuelsen! It surprises me a little all the same. Hasn't he sent home his collection of sermons either?"

"Yes, of course. But now I've lost my spectacles and I can't read a thing. It's an odd thing, it's the magpie that's carried them off."

"The magpie? Ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at," says Lars Manuelsen, hurt. "I know it's the magpie. But what I was going to say is: Is it right for Theodore of Bua to keep a two-crown bit which he picks up from the wharf and sticks in his pocket?"

Lars Manuelsen tells the whole story and vows that the two-crown piece is his. The solicitor promises to have a talk with Theodore, with young Jensen, about it. "However, it doesn't seem worth the while of a man like you, Manuelsen, to worry about it," says the solicitor. "What are two crowns?"

"My earnings haven't been what they used to be in former springs," answers Lars Manuelsen. "There are few strangers at the hotel. The last commercial traveller lay here in his own ship, and wasn't on shore. There was nothing to be made out of him."

"I heard about that traveller," says the solicitor.

"His name was Didriksen, and there was playing and dancing and drinking on board. It was an abomination to all of us to see it."

"Then he was a gay young man, I suppose," says the

solicitor, absent-mindedly, putting out his hand for a packet of papers on his table.

"I should think he was! At night he stopped the dancing and ran out across the harbour with two girls. One of them was your Florina."

"Florina? Ah, well, youth and folly! So—Florina?"

"I say no more; it's not a thing to talk about," says Lars Manuelsen. And now he looks the solicitor full in the face, and says these words: "But *I* believe it was there that Florina got her toothache."

Lawyer Rasch did not move even in his chair and abstained from throwing a hasty glance at Lars Manuelsen. But his eyes took on the expression of someone startled by something loud, something deafening. What did the man with the wig mean to suggest? What did he know?

"Indeed," said Lawyer Rasch. "But does Florina complain of toothache?"

"And sickness," said Lars Manuelsen.

"That too? Well, one should not dance oneself hot in the spring and catch cold."

"Nils of Vælta has broken off with her now."

"Indeed. Yes, one thing leads to another."

"So long as you know it," said Lars Manuelsen.

At that, Lawyer Rasch had to smile; he was not pawned and sold yet; what did the old fellow mean?

"In a house like ours," said he, "It is the mistress who has to do with the servant-girls. It isn't my department."

Then Lars Manuelsen rose, and he too smiled—a little sidelong smile, which the solicitor did not misunderstand; he was even a little embarrassed.

"As to the two crowns, I'll give them to you with pleasure, Manuelsen," he said, and handed him the money, "so sure am I that young Jensen will hand over what is due to you."

"Thanks," said Lars Manuelsen. "And if you will put in the paper what you said about my son, Lassen, it would be just as well people should know it."

"I can't do that," answered the solicitor. "I'm not the

editor of the *Segelfoss News*."—At times the solicitor had nothing against being taken for the paper's real master, with power for good or ill; at other times he didn't like it. There stood the old rogue, Lars Manuelsen, showing not a sign of humility or timidity; he seemed to think he had a right to payment for something—what could it be? And when he was offered the two crowns he had calmly taken them and said thank you. He is making some mistake! Lawyer Rasch was not a man one could send to St. Helena!

But Lars Manuelsen had acquired with age quite a superb assurance; he had stuck to his colours.

"And at the same time," said he, "you might as well mention who Lassen's parents are up in the north here."

The solicitor only shook his head at this and occupied himself with the bundle of papers.

Then Lars Manuelsen left.

A few days later he came again.

"I'm busy. Let Lars wait," said the solicitor to his clerk.

Lars Manuelsen waited a good while in the outer office; when he was let in at last, the solicitor looked up and said:

"Be brief to-day, Lars; I am very busy."

"Hm. There was nothing in the paper," said Lars Manuelsen.

Then Lawyer Rasch screwed himself round and raised his fat bulk from the chair.

"I won't have any more of this talk about the paper," he said, red in the face. "Go to the paper yourself. The editor's name is Kopperud, mine's Rasch."

"I won't bandy words with you; I don't need to," said Lars Manuelsen, and went out of the door.

The solicitor stood puckering his forehead and thinking; he strode across the floor and stopped, gazing at the wall, considering. Suddenly he called out into the outer room, and asked:

"Has Manuelsen gone? Did Manuelsen go?"

"Yes. Shall I run after him?"

"Yes. Ask him to come in again."

The solicitor stands in his office and hears his clerk shout outside, and Lars Manuelsen's uncompromising reply: "I don't need to."

So the die was cast! Did the old rogue want war? Poor man, war with Lawyer Rasch! But the day was spoiled for the solicitor; how could he fight with such a sorry rascal? Was it not better to show forbearance? The day was ruined none the less, there had been so many disturbances.

"Hasn't that payment come from the sheriff to-day either?" he said to his clerk. "He has sold by auction to the value of several hundred crowns and doesn't send the money; what's the meaning of that?"

The clerk shakes his head.

The good sheriff of Ura had better beware!

The solicitor is not good-humoured and talkative at the midday dinner-table either; he has an important matter to deal with, he says; an enormous bundle of documents. He will go back to his office again at once—"Send Florina there with the coffee!"

"Look here! why are you going about with that horrible shawl round your mouth?" says the solicitor, when he is alone in the office with the girl Florina.

"Because I have toothache," answers Florina.

"Can you expect anything but toothache if you dance yourself hot and then go out to sea on such frosty nights as we are having still?"

"You know about that, do you?" asks Florina. "Then you know, too, why I did it, no doubt?"

The solicitor answers with a curt "No," and does not pursue the subject.

Strange and incomprehensible words now fall from the girl Florina's lips. Hints, half-spoken words: "God is my witness!" "What will become of me!" The solicitor answers sometimes angrily, sometimes laughingly. "Ho, ho!" said he, "let Nils of Vælta go—do you want to have a sweetheart on every finger, perhaps? Haven't you a new one? What's his name—Didriksen?"

"You know that as well?" says Florina. "Then you know, too, why I did it, I suppose."

"No," answers the solicitor again. "But in any case take that shawl off in the house. I never heard of such a thing —a good-looking young girl, bank-book and all. Don't throw away the bank-book!"

Florina says:

"I wish I'd never had it."

"Rubbish! Nils of Vælta will be glad enough to take both you and the bank-book."

But when the solicitor put out his hand for the packet of papers, wishing to indicate that she might go, Florina had recourse to tears. The girl Florina was not at the end of her tether by any means—she had developed with Segelfoss town—she knew how to play her cards.

"Hush! not so much noise!" the solicitor warned her.

The girl Florina wished to prolong the moment, no doubt —it soothed one so; she was stubborn for all her down-heartedness; she took to the sort of technical expressions affected by girls of her kind, and declared that there was little heart in the man who had "plucked her flower."

"Flower?" answered Lawyer Rasch, jumping up in a rage. "The devil take me—flower?"

"There's the bank-book!" said Florina, laying it on the table. "I won't have it!"

For a whole second Lawyer Rasch stared at the girl. Suddenly he gave a short laugh and said: "Now, I'm going to add a little, a nice little sum under to-day's date. There, show that to Nils of Vælta!"

The solicitor wrote in the book and handed it back to the girl with something in the nature of a bow. She took it and, perhaps from confusion, perhaps from curiosity, she opened it and read what was written in it. Then she wrapped the shawl over her mouth again, stuck the book into the front of her dress and went out.

Done. Settled. The solicitor made the entry in the bank's books and fell to thinking again. Yes, all was in

order. But it was best to show kindliness and forbearance towards Lars Manuelsen all the same. That poor old worm could never stand up against hard handling—the man that has the most sense should make use of it.

The solicitor stands in the doorway and dictates to his clerk: "To the Sheriff, Ura. The auction-proceeds due to the Segelfoss Loan and Savings Bank, and paid in to you, you are hereby requested to remit to the undersigned within eight (8) days. Yours faithfully."

The day is spoilt. Lawyer Rasch takes his hat and stick and thinks of something to do outside. He hears sounds of hammering and knocking beyond the point and goes thither; carpenters are at work at the shed, Per of Bua's dancing-hall—the shed is being enlarged, a huge annexe is being added, a stage is being built, benches are being made. What's afoot?

"We're to have a theatre here," answer the workmen.

Matches for the Old Gentleman, indeed! He was to have a theatre instead!

The solicitor stands and looks on for a time. Baardsen comes rolling up; he must have something to do with the new building, he gives orders, points here and there. The solicitor expects the telegraphist to take some notice of him —not a bit of it.—The telegraphist only measures one of the walls with a yard-measure and gives another order. Was this the way to treat Lawyer Rasch, as if he were air, as if he did not exist? This telegraphist had always been insufferable; he did not greet one, but he drank and played the 'cello, and was a danger to girls—the wastrel.

Lawyer Rasch finds an excuse for looking in at the store. The flap in the counter opens for him and he stumps in on his heavy feet, stumps over the floor and into the office —Theodore's little closet with its desk and money-safe and revolving stool. Theodore is writing.

The solicitor brings up the affair of the two crowns. It was a small matter, but Herr Rasch may well think it just as important as many other of his affairs.

Why should he lose two crowns on Lars Manuelsen's account? All his wealth was built up of small two-crown bits.

When Theodore hears what he wants, he is actually speechless for a little; his face is comic in its surprise. But as he has a clever head, he knows he must not make too many bones about the matter.

"Here you are!" said he. "I had forgotten all about that two-crown bit. Yes, I found it on the quay."

"Thank you!" said the solicitor. "I said at once that I knew you would hand it over when you were reminded of it. How is everything going, Jensen?"

"Oh, all right."

But Theodore of Bua was not very fond of throwing money about, either; he had not been trained to do it, and still less did it come natural to him.

"But all the same you needn't think that it was Lars Manuelsen's two crowns," he said.

But Lawyer Rasch had got his money back, he only said:

"I don't understand your bothering to think of such a trifle any longer, Jensen. You who deal with such big sums."

"I'm not thinking of it either. I'm just telling you."

"Yes, I understand. By the by, what is this you are doing —are you building a theatre?"

Theodore wags his head:

"Don't talk about it—yes, I'm building a theatre."

But the solicitor does not understand and asks what it all means.

"A theatre, to be sure, a place of amusement," answers Theodore. "These actors write to me as the best-known man in the place and beg to be allowed to come and act plays. So they have to have a house, of course."

The solicitor was greatly offended at this speech.

"Are you the best-known man in the place?" said he. "I didn't know it."

Now, perhaps, little Theodore of Bua may have made a

slip of the tongue only; maybe he meant to say that he was the man who knew the place best; but he had to give way before a learned man, of course. He gave way further when the solicitor said:

"I don't understand how anyone could write you on such a subject. It is a thing you know nothing about."

"I have got the telegraph-superintendent, Baardsen, to look after it," answered Theodore meekly.

"Yes, and a fine one he is!" sneered the solicitor. "I never heard of such a thing."

"He comes of a great family. He has been much in theatres."

"Indeed. I've never heard of the Baardsen family."

"It is a great and rich merchant family."

"Yes," said the solicitor, "his family would be in trade! Well, it's all the same to me. But have you made sure of the *Segelfoss News* for your undertaking?"

Theodore did not grasp his meaning.

"And have the actors approached the *Segelfoss News* with regard to their performances?"

"I don't know."

"Well, it's all the same to me," said the solicitor.

He went his way, but he was extremely upset all the same. So! the best-known man in Segelfoss was Theodore of Bua! "Happy innocence!" it was called in Latin. And, about theatrical matters, people did not write to a Rasch or to a District-doctor Muus, they wrote to Theodore of Bua!

In the meantime vexation must have infected little Theodore; he ran after the solicitor and showed him the actors' letter—read it for yourself! And there it actually stood, that Theodore Jensen was the best-known man in Segelfoss, He had only quoted.

"Maybe *you* will take over charge of the building?" asked Theodore in a rage.

"I? What for? I will take over charge of no building."

"I thought since you were mixing yourself up in it so——?"

Really, this was going too far; was the store-mouse showing his teeth?

"Take care, little man!" said the solicitor.

"Take care yourself!" answered Theodore. He had become Per of Bua's son suddenly: angry, forceful, irritated by the loss of a two-crown bit and by the other's tone of superiority.

What! was Theodore standing there and setting himself up against Rasch? The lawyer went on his way, putting on an air as if the store and the people belonging to it and all its customers and the whole of Segelfoss were but a morsel of his own domain—that's how he stumped along. But he might tread as heavily as he would, his steps did not sound steady. It seemed as though everyone knew something about him to-day.

Indeed, Theodore was shouting something or other after him—something about a two-crown piece. It was this trifling matter, then, and nothing else, that little Theodore knew about him. The solicitor felt firm ground beneath his feet once more. But little Theodore must know more; he stood there, small and fierce and revengeful, and shouted sneering remarks after the solicitor. And he wouldn't have called out about Nils of Vælta and about the girl Florina's bank-book without meaning something.

Little Theodore slipped back to his store just like a dog that has been out barking at a passer-by and is not a bit ashamed. He began to hold forth to his customers straightway: he had done this and that for the town, for Segelfoss; he had put up a new flagstaff and flagged with a brand-new flag; now he was building a theatre for the players who were coming; later he would get a resident photographer to the place, he had already written to one. What did Lawyer Rasch do? Moreover, he intended to put up a big sign-board on the store "with our firm's name," said Theodore—the commercial traveller, Didriksen, was to get him a sign in gold and many colours. It did not sound very much perhaps, but anyhow it meant that Segelfoss would be like

other towns. What did Rasch do? "And have you seen the new May-flowers for this year?" asked Theodore. "See, here they are, a penny each, the proceeds to go to the good of the community. I have taken over the sale so that we may all buy a flower and stick it on our breasts and be like folk in other towns."

And now that he had got going, he called out loudly through the store to his assistant Kornelius and to the other shop-boy: "Clear up the storehouse, boys; our spring goods will be here to-night!"

Julius, the hotel-keeper, who so often hung around the store to gossip, happened to be there now. Perhaps he scented a chance to make money, a job, and he was not one who was too fine to put his hand to anything. Julius fine? He was ungodly and healthy and coarse, but not spoilt, not good for nothing. His father was quite demoralized and could not work any longer on account of his wig; his mother made a bit of a fool of herself by going about with a muff in winter, but otherwise she toiled and moiled as before in spite of being L. Lassen's mother. But Julius was after money wherever he saw the slightest chance of it—and then he had such a pair of fists! He asked:

"Then you're getting a lot of goods to-night."

Theodore answered:

"A hundred packages or so are coming for our firm."

"Do you need any help?"

"I have engaged help," answered Theodore shortly.

Doubtless Julius did not know that Theodore was two crowns out of pocket to his father to-day, two crowns utterly thrown away on a liar—Julius could not have known that. He thought only of the money he was missing.

"A hundred packages? I don't believe it," said he.

A couple of customers who had been drinking for some time down at the old wine-bar backed him up and laughed and said: "A hundred packages! That's all brag!"

"Let us say there are some cases—that there are ten cases," went on Julius.

"I don't care a rap for you!" said Theodore, nettled.

Here stood this fellow Julius and made game of him in the hearing of a lot of people. But there was nothing to be done with him; you couldn't throw him out of the door, and he had a foul mouth.

"A good deal will go into ten cases," he said.

"Yes," put in one of the drunken customers again, "I would be quite glad if I had the ten cases. Theodore might have the other ninety if he liked!"—At which they laughed loudly.

"You people don't understand these things!" said Theodore. "I'm getting a whole case of nothing but hair-combs!" And with that Theodore went into his office so as not to hear more.

Julius asked:

"Hair-combs, what are they? Fine combs, coarse combs?"

Whereupon the assistant laughed loudly:

"What a fellow you are, Julius! No, they are combs to put in the hair, back-combs. The height of the fashion just now! there's no one in London but wears such a comb. But they're not for old folks, they're for girls only; and they ought to have combs to match their hair by rights, yellow or brown, as the case may be."

"What do they cost?" was asked from the wine-counter.

"The invoice will show. We haven't worked it out yet."

But when evening came and the steamer from the south lay alongside the quay, it stayed there the usual time only, and discharged and loaded the usual goods, and then went off again. The hundred packages for the store did not come. A fairly big crowd of people had gathered at the quay, chiefly young folk who were looking forward to the spring goods; they had to laugh and chatter to hide their disappointment; Theodore himself was there with bows on his shoes, unabashed as ever; maybe he had never expected his spring wares that evening, but had merely wished to advertise them. It would be just like the vain lad to turn the sensation to good account a long time beforehand. "Where are the

hundred packages?" asked Julius. "And where are the ten cases of hair-combs?" he demanded cheekily.

But something happened that evening all the same: Herr Holmengraa came back. Where had he been and what had happened to him? He was silent and mysterious; he did not smile and he spoke but few words. A change had taken place in him, anyone could see that—even his clothes were fine and new and lined with silk. But the strangest thing of all was the way Herr Holmengraa looked at one. Had he got a squint? He looked as if he had been fasting a good deal.

When he stepped off the landing-stage, Lawyer and Fru Rasch were standing right in front of him. You see, Lawyer Rasch wished to show people that he took his wife out for a walk as often as his weighty affairs gave him time; he had stumped down to the quay with her now—by no means a bad idea, for there were many people about. He bade Herr Holmengraa good evening as he came ashore, but Herr Holmengraa did not answer, he merely touched his hat with his open hand—and upon his middle finger he had a strange-looking gold ring. "Welcome home!" said the solicitor. To this Herr Holmengraa answered nothing, but passed on, staring aslant like a cross-eyed person, as though something queer were to be seen just beside the solicitor.

"There was something uncanny about that!" said the lawyer to his wife. And he spoke loud to make himself important and to show how much he knew.

The bystanders listened. His wife asked innocently:

"What was uncanny?"

"Did you see the ring he had on his hand?"

"The ring?"

Julius raised his voice, for Julius was a pushing fellow who made no bones about putting a question or two to the great and mighty. He said:

"I saw the ring. What kind of a ring was it?"

The solicitor put on a lofty air and looked at Julius as

if he really couldn't be expected to answer him. He bent towards his wife and asked:

"Did you not see, too, how he squinted? I'm certain he has fasted for many days."

What was the meaning of all these queries? He was not saying this because he was superstitious, still less ironically—was he talking to uphold Herr Holmengraa and set him in the limelight? No! Lawyer Rasch wished to set no one in the limelight but himself. He spoke that he might show off—out of self-importance; to put a little fear into Lars Manuelsen, the old rascal; to impress Theodore of Bua, who was standing a short distance away, and on his part was feigning not to take the slightest notice of the lawyer.

"But can't you say what kind of a ring it was, sir?" asked Julius.

The lawyer answered at last.

"It is not for you to ask, Julius, for it is beyond your comprehension, but it was the freemason ring and nothing else."

And now the lawyer would have liked to withdraw from the crowd; but his wife was so incautious as to say:

"The freemason ring? Is that a very great thing?"

The lawyer answered her with reproachful solemnity:

"I have always understood so, Kristine. On the wall of my parents' home there hangs the portrait of my mother's grandfather, the agent-general. He holds his right hand like this; there is a ring on the middle finger—the freemason ring. So I should know something about it."

"But what's the good of the ring?" asked Julius. Oh, that devil of a Julius, he could never hold his tongue!

The lawyer was not going to say any more in public—not a word; he turned and said to his wife, to clinch the matter: "Herr Holmengraa now stands about as high as any mortal well can!"

Then he and his wife walked away.

And now all began to think deeply over what they had heard, and to discuss the ring; they looked after Herr Holmengraa with solemn curiosity and nodded—yes, this must be freemasonry in earnest. There he goes sunk in awful thoughts, his eyes looked aslant—God knew whether they saw the petty things of this world any longer: The lawyer had said there was something uncanny in it all. Lars Manuelsen said abruptly: "I'll send a letter to Lassen, my son, and ask about it!" Someone gave expression to a doubt of Lassen's knowing: "I have heard that no one knows anything about a freemason!" Whereupon Lars Manuelsen smiled—it was the only smile in this grave assembly—and answered: "There's nothing you can name that Lassen doesn't know!"

All were much shaken. They seemed to stand in the presence of eternity, of an enigma, a sinister oath, a bond signed with blood!

VI

THE magpie had built her nest, laid her eggs and hatched them out—the family circle was complete up there in their birch-tree top, and the parent-birds were doing their duty by their home.

Lars Manuelsen went over to Bertel of Sagvika's; Bertel himself was up at the mill, but old Katrina was sitting at home, sewing sacks for the works. Lars Manuelsen's errand was to ask if he might borrow the ladder. "Yes, by all means take the ladder," answered Katrina, "but what do you want with it?" "I want to get up on to the roof to put my smoke-vent in order," answered Lars Manuelsen.

He took the ladder home with him. His wife was down at the hotel, so he was quite alone at home. The ladder was heavy, and he mopped his face and wig with a handkerchief.

A magpie flew out of the big nest right in front of him; soon afterwards the other magpie came out too, and flew away across the common; Lars Manuelsen set the ladder up against the birch-tree and climbed up to the nest.

He was in search of his spectacles, no doubt; he peered into the nest and saw nothing but the young magpies. There was something repulsive about these naked creatures; they had not got their feathers, but with their unnaturally long beaks they gaped worse than full-grown birds. From time to time they cheeped, from time to time they hissed—Lars Manuelsen could not put his hand in and throw them out, but he would make a job of it and loosen the whole nest and pitch it down. It sat very fast in its fork, and it was hard work for Lars Manuelsen to get the nest loose; at last he got a bit of it, half of it, broken off, and let it drop to the ground. He looked down after it; the magpie-pair were sitting just below. His spectacles he could not find; the young magpies gaped and hissed like little devils; in a rage Lars Manuelsen pulled away the rest of the nest and let it fall to earth, young ones and all. There it lay.

The pair of magpies sat and looked on.

He climbed down from the ladder and began to look through the nest: rags, bones, bits of glass, a piece of shining nickel—what's that? The spectacles were nowhere to be seen, but instead there was a tuft of clean wool and a usable brass comb. Lars Manuelsen saved what he could. And there lies the piece of nickel still; Lars Manuelsen looks at it closer and says to himself: You see if this isn't the little key which Fru Irgens at Holmengraa's has lost! Didn't she go about all winter asking folk about the key to the storehouse, and here it is. Lars Manuelsen thrust the key into his pocket carefully and ran his eyes over the nest again —no, he could not find anything more. He finished by treading the young magpies to death one by one, and so exterminated the magpie-brood. The parents sat and looked on.

When Lars Manuelsen bore the ladder back to Sagvika and thanked old Katrina for the loan, she said: "There's no occasion for thanks. Did you get your smoke-vent put right?"

"Yes," answered Lars Manuelsen.

He went home and cleared the magpie nest out of the way; when he had done that, he took a walk down to the hotel. It was his second home; his wife cooked the food in the hotel kitchen and he himself carried the travellers' boxes to and fro. Julius supported his mother in a fashion in return for her work; his father lived on the tips.

Julius was no bad business man. He could not read well and the signs and marks he wrote were for his own use only; but he had great capacity and a marvellous memory; he always had the hotel accounts clear in his head. And wasn't it deucedly well done to have started this hotel with two empty hands? Of course, in the beginning he had to borrow some money from the Segelfoss Loan and Savings Bank at the time when everyone was borrowing; he used that for the house—for the timber and fittings, not for show and fine clothes. He seemed to have luck with him—he did not get little Pauline from Segelfoss manor, who would have made such a good mistress for the hotel; no, he did not get her, the silly child did not care for him, perhaps; but Julius had great good fortune otherwise. That his first house was burnt just when it was well finished, was no loss to him—indeed he made money by it, did a good stroke of business; Julius got a new house, and furniture into the bargain, by that deal—he had had two beds; he had six now. That was pure luck, a regular windfall.

And in the autumn the first commercial travellers began to come. First, one came up from the mail-boat; he went to the store with his fur coat over his arm and his samples in a portmanteau. Later on, another came; he looked even more like a bagman—he had a bag in each hand—and Julius stepped up and carried them. But it was not long before the big commercial travellers came with iron-bound boxes,

and they could not unpack at the store, they had to go to the hotel, to the big dining-hall. From that time Julius became hotel-keeper in earnest; he installed his father as porter, and himself as manager. But in the dead months in the middle of summer and the middle of winter, Julius did anything, and was ready to pick up anything he could live on, just like a raven—he would work for Theodore of Bua at his split-fish drying even, if there was no other way of making money.

Things were going well with Julius then, and it was the same with all Lars Manuelsen's children. Daverdana had her own house and a sure livelihood; now and again she would come and help at the hotel when there were many visitors. Three others of the family were doing for themselves; one sister was married in Trondhjem; Pastor Lassen had got one brother into the lighthouse service; and another brother who had not turned out well, he had shipped off to America. On the whole, then, Brother Lassen had done his share for the family, and let no one deny that he was a great man and able to do something! But he didn't do more than he chose to do. Just now Julius was trying to get himself a sign for the hotel on the cheap; Kornelius, the shop-boy, was to print it for nothing on an iron plate, and Julius had written to his brother to ask whether he might put "Lassen's Hotel" on the plate. No, that would not do; as was to be expected, Pastor Lassen would never allow his name to appear upon an hotel sign. "Put 'Larsen's Hotel' on it," he wrote; "but I'll put up there if ever I come north!" And then he went on to ask whether Herr Holmengraa was running his big mill still and was as rich now as he used to be, and finally he wrote that he had met Mariane casually a couple of times in Christiania and that she had grown charming; "remember me to her!"

"Lars is making a fool of himself!" said Julius, and laughed disgracefully.

His father, who had come in, reproved him, saying that Lassen was not a man anyone laughed at.

"I don't care a hang for him," said Julius. "Is there anything more in the letter?"

Daverdana, who had been called in to read it, continued:

"Don't forget the following, Brother Julius: Travellers at hotels often leave books behind them or throw them away when they have read them; please keep such books if you find any, and send them to me that I may add them to my library and save them from destruction."

"Lars and his books!" murmured his mother, wagging her head.

"I'm very likely to do that!" said Julius, with a jeer. "He does not say what he is going to give me for it."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself if you were a decent Christian!" burst out Lars Manuelsen. "There are two books lying in the dining-hall now, and I'm going for them at once."

"I care no more for Lars than for my old shoe," declared Julius.

Lars Manuelsen came back with the books and said: "If you won't put them by for Lassen, then I'll do it."

Daverdana read the titles: *Arson in Tetervik, Blood-hounds on the Trail,* and said: "Mayn't I have them?"

"They'll be two quite good books when I get them bound," said Julius, going on teasing his father. "I won't part with them for two crowns, tell Lars with my compliments."

Suddenly the mirth died out of his face; he had seen the sheriff through the window.

It may be Julius was not quite as honourable in all things as he ought to have been, and he did not care to see the sheriff in his hotel. He was unmannerly to everyone, but from his childhood up he had always had a way of growing oddly chap-fallen just when he should have brazened it out. Here now was the sheriff, wearing his gold-braided cap and with his bag over his shoulder. "Good day!" said he.

A more peaceable man was not to be found. He had come when Lars Manuelsen was to be distrained upon, or when Lars Manuelsen had been charged with sheep-stealing on the waste lands, and he always said "Good day!" when he came, and "Good-bye!" when he went. He had come to Julius about a really bad business—an exchange of watches with Aslak at the mill; and Aslak had claimed both compensation and a fine, but the sheriff had merely made them exchange watches all over again and made it up between the two men. That was the sheriff of Ura.

He seats himself and talks to the people of the house about one thing and another, and, after he has done that, he comes to his errand: "It is about the auction bill, Julius. But I don't know if it is convenient?"

Julius is a worthless fellow, kindness is wasted upon him. Since it is only a question of overdue auction money, he becomes bumptious and insolent.

"You shouldn't have put yourself out for that," he replies. "I would have come to the office and paid it."

"I had business here, at any rate."

"But I haven't the money to-day," says Julius. "I'll come one of these days."

"It happens that the bank wants their money at once," returns the sheriff. "The solicitor has sent me a fresh reminder."

Julius becomes still more insolent:

"How much is it? It's nothing to speak of! Besides, I want to know if all the others have paid."

"No," says the sheriff. "Most of them answered like you that they will come later."

"I shall try to come this evening," declares Julius. "I will borrow the money."

When the sheriff is well out of the door, Julius shrugs his shoulders and swaggers: "Pooh—I don't care a rap about him! The pilots have a gold band round their hats too."

"You should not have promised him the money this

evening," says his mother. "Where do you think you'll get it from?"

Julius pretends not to hear her. Instead of answering, he unfolds a plan he has:

"I'll buy six small cream-jugs, so that the visitors can each have their own. If they have one big one among them, the first that comes to the table empties the whole jug just as though it were milk, and when the next comes he just raps on the table for more. No, thank you!"

"Yes, that's so!" agrees his mother.

"It shan't happen again!" says Julius. "The books!—What's become of the books, Daverdana?"

His father has laid the books aside; Julius finds them and does not let them out of his hands again. And now Julius feels so very high and mighty that he can bait his father a little more:

"When I get them bound, Lars can buy them."

"You're a brute!" says Lars Manuelsen.

"Ha, ha, ha!—'remember me to her!' He needn't worry. I can't understand it; it sounds almost as if he were a bit dotty."

"Who is dotty?"

"Lars. Yes, I swear he is. What do you think, Father?"

"You're nothing but a big gas-bag!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, but won't you go and give her his message? And then, what about Lars sitting and thinking about the books the guests leave behind them, thrown away in a corner? Isn't it splendid?"

"Then it's Paulina who is to have the books, I suppose?" puts in Daverdana.

"Paulina? Aye, and what if it is?"

"Don't you worry. She won't have anything to do with you."

The shot went home. Julius became furious: "Paulina can go to blazes! Womenfolk are all so much dirt! What do you think I care about them? But you, Daverdana, shan't have the books."

"I don't want them, then."

"Never in this world shall you have them," said Julius.

"Oh, yes! you talk very big just now. But you may need me some day yet, perhaps!"

"No! I won't need you. What should I want you for? I'll get a housekeeper from town, and she can do everything. What do you think of that, Mother? Then you can go home again."

His mother began to weep:

"Well, well! The Lord has fed me to this hour with His gracious crumbs, and He will take care of me hereafter, too, I doubt not."

"Yes," says Lars Manuelsen, "our Lord will surely take care of us old parents henceforth as He has heretofore."

"Yes, and Lars too!" sneers Julius. "The great Lassen!" he jeers.

Lars Manuelsen gets up, exasperated, and answers weightily:

"I won't set my foot inside this house again, you see if I do. As for my son Lassen, he's a holy man; and as for you, I'm ashamed of you before God and man. Would that you were only as sure of God's Kingdom as he!"

"What has he sent you?" asks Julius. "You would have been on the parish, both of you, if I had not been here!"

His mother weeps; Lars Manuelsen stands with the door-handle in his hand. The whole thing was doubtless one of those little squabbles which ended peacefully after all. Daverdana was hurt about the new housekeeper:

"So you're going to get a housekeeper from town?"

"Well, and what if I do?"

"And six cream-jugs—that head of yours is swelling more and more!"

"Six cream-jugs," nods Julius. "I'll get them this evening."

"But you couldn't pay the sheriff."

"Don't you poke your snout into that!" cried Julius. "Couldn't I pay the sheriff? He only need have taken the

bill out of his bag, and I would have paid him on the spot."

Daverdana laughed; and the two old folk laughed too. Julius thrust his hand into his pocket for his pocket-book and pulled some notes out—a heap of money—he counted them out loudly and boastfully, laid down each note with a thump on the table, and when he came to the last he gave a thundering bang.

"Couldn't I have paid the sheriff? What do you think?"

He gazed round, all were speechless. That devil of a Julius, he had scraped money together, he carried it in his bosom, he was rich. Daverdana pretended to think it was not much—not a very great deal of money; she made a face at it and said:

"Do you think these notes are anything to brag of? I saw three thousand once!"

Her father, though, changed his attitude:

"You shouldn't behave like that to Julius, Daverdana: I won't have it. There's nothing wrong with Julius; I have always said so, and your mother knows it too. And since you have so much money, Julius, you won't let an old father want bread. You would be ashamed to do that."

"Want bread? Write to Lars!" answered Julius.

"A crown or two would make no odds to you."

"Not a farthing. Write to Lars."

"Let him keep his notes!" burst out Daverdana, and got up angrily. "They'll bring no luck!" And as she went she called back to Julius: "You needn't trouble to send for me again!"

But, of course, many days did not pass before Julius sent for Daverdana again and Daverdana came. They were not on bad terms at bottom; the whole family held together in its own way, and at the same time Julius looked out for himself in particular. The others did the same. Had Julius ever been shrewder? He was in debt to the store and to the sheriff—was he to pay his debt and leave himself penniless, to ruin himself? Ho, ho! Julius had his own notion, his own purpose in all this: it had to do with the taxes—the

point was to pay as little tax as was humanly possible. In this he had the whole family with him; they had worked to that end all their days. Taxes! what were they? Never had money been more uselessly squeezed from the poor man's bones and marrow! said Julius. Taxes; they were for the rich, for the gentry, and since Segelfoss had become a separate parish, there was no end to taxes. He would join in wiping out the gentry—he would fire the first shot at them.

Lars Manuelsen was of the same mind with his son; he gainsaid him in nothing just now, for the dead, tipless months were at hand, and it was good to have the kitchen of Larsen's Hotel to shelter in. So it was Julius this and Julius that, and father and son were bosom friends.

The devil of a boy, that Julius! Others would have flashed their money about; Julius—even though he was courting—hid his in his pocket and had debts both here and there, out of very cunning. He ought to have had a flag for the hotel, to be sure—the wharf had a flag, the store had a flag, the *Segelfoss News* had a flag; but Julius—could he afford one?

Ah! he was a cowardly, worthless fellow, but as crafty as could be.

But what about the sheriff of Ura who got no money? It was his own fault; he did not understand Segelfoss any longer—you had to use claws; and this had not dawned upon him. A man like Lawyer Rasch was not easy to make out. Auction money on the date due—well and good; but if one hadn't got it? The sheriff and his wife had even been at the lawyer's wedding a few years before, so surely they should be kindly disposed, and friendly to one another?

How time had changed the place and the people! Neighbours quarrelled over a boat-landing; the workmen at the mill reported one another to the sheriff for assault and stabbing at dances; a lad who was ptarmigan-shooting far up in the hills was summoned for poaching. Nothing was as it used to be. And now the sheriff himself was in danger. He had been to see Lawyer Rasch and could not quite pay

off his liabilities, and he had been threatened. Were such things reasonable?

The fact was, the sheriff had got in most of the auction money due to the bank and, unfortunately, used it himself. That's how things were; he was badly in arrears. He had many quite good claims in hand, dating from bygone times, but as he had no claws he got nothing in; the round of his district, which he had been making for some days now, to supplement the efforts of the regular collector, had led to little but disappointment. Things looked black. He had an eighteen-months-old steer; it would be a pity to get rid of the beast now so near summer, but perhaps Herr Holmengraa would buy it like the kindly man he was. The couple of hundred crowns would be a help. The sheriff had a fine horse too; he could get along with a cheaper one.

"You are so cross and sulky to-day, Sheriff," says Fröken Mariane to him, jokingly. "What have I done to you?"

"Good only, to-day as always," answers the sheriff.

"I've never seen you look so dreadfully angry and bitter," Mariane goes on, joking still. "Though I haven't thrown you over," says she.

To this the sheriff makes no reply, but merely laughs and shakes his head at her nonsense.

Then they talk of this and that, and Mariane is still in a playful mood.

So the sheriff in his turn says: "Young Willatz will be coming before long, I dare say, and then I'll tell him he can't rely upon you."

"If you dare!" threatens Mariane. "Would you take from me the only one I can get?"

"Will anything come of it this year?" asks the sheriff.

"I don't know," she replies. "But I see your head is full of nothing but the wedding, Sheriff, when you can come and drink and smoke the livelong night. Ha, ha, ha! What gay dogs you and papa are!"

"May I have a word with your father?"

"So that you may gossip over what I have said? Though

papa is more sulky even than you are. He must have got engaged when he was in town: he came home wearing a ring."

"So I heard."

"A comic sort of ring; there isn't even a stone in it. I've warned him I won't exchange any of mine for it."

"Fröken Mariane, do you think I might have a word with Fru Irgens?"

She glances at him quickly, and asks:

"What is it?"

"Well, it's this," he answers. No, it's nothing. It's only that I want to sell an ox."

She thinks for a little; she sees the old man smile, but she only half believes in his smile. Ah! Mariane was no little girl now who understood nothing.

"Will that give you the help you want?"

He says nothing, but gazes at her astonished. When she repeats her question, he answers:

"The help I want? Yes, thanks!"

"For an ox is just what we need. We were saying again, only to-day, that we might have to send out into the country for beef. Young Willatz will soon be here and he generally has someone with him, and when they come to dinner they are all big eaters. And you'll come too, Sheriff, you'll want to taste the ox—oh, yes, I know you!"

"Ha, ha! I had to laugh when you spoke about my needing help. The beast is a year and a half old—I could keep it until the autumn, but if you want it so badly——"

"Well, now I'll call Fru Irgens."

Herr Holmengraa did not make his appearance—no, he saw hardly anyone, he kept himself upstairs in his bedroom. Every day, now as always, he paid a visit to his office at the wharf, where the wharf-manager was at work, and from there went to the mill and saw how it was working. He would meet a line of carters taking loads of flour down to the quay—he did not speak to them. No, he was trying a new plan—and it really seemed a good one: he did not

utter a word to the workmen, but said all he had to say to Bertel of Sagvika, who was master miller, and to Ole Johan, whom he made works-foreman with higher wages. Not that Herr Holmengraa said much to them either; he gave his orders briefly: "The big consignment for the north is to be shipped on the mail-boat this evening, remember that!" "We're hard at work on it," answers Bertel. "Let me see that everything is done with a will, Ole Johan; you have your men!" And Ole Johan, who has grown with responsibility and his better pay, works like an ox. He was desperately stupid, to be sure, but strong as a horse, with flour-caked clothes, good-natured, and with a mighty compass of arms. He had worked at the mill from the first day, and had everything at his finger-ends, and when he rose to foreman he clung faster to the mill than ever, and even on Sundays he would go up and look at it with a feeling almost of joint-ownership. "We," he would say about the works. "We pour out flour," he would say about the millstones. Yes, Ole Johan would see to it that things went with a will, sure enough.

When Herr Holmengraa left the works, he went straight home again. That was his new method. It was as though he were following advice he had been given; he had learned it by rote, and very likely it bored him too. The fine clothes with silk lining did not allow him to move freely, they were a penance and a plague, and the lonely hours in his bedroom were horribly dull. What was he to do with himself? It was spring, the earth was young again, all nature was going crazy again; even the old mill-owner felt the miracle within him once more. In days past he had been wont to hang round his own and others' houses, as occasion offered, and so had met many a sudden adventure, many a stolen joy, made many a wonderful discovery. That was over now—his new plan fettered him.

There could be no doubt about it—Herr Holmengraa was trying a new plan. To revive respect among his people, he

was no longer going to mix with them, he was going to make a rarity of himself—to dress finely and hold aloof from them. He wore the mystic ring, too—perhaps it might help him. He understood his people, he was one of them by birth, one who had risen from the lowest ranks of the people—he knew the world he had sprung from. Before, when he met one of his workmen on the road, he would think at once with secret fear: Will he salute me? Will he not salute me? Things were better now; the workmen touched their hats. That was something already—the ring and his new plan had worked. One must be careful though! How should he salute them in return? In this, too, he followed advice, maybe: He would not give much of a greeting—hardly any at all—only a nod—hardly even a nod—just give the man a glance of recognition and pass on, thinking of other things. In the afternoon he might stroll out again—he need not shun the daylight. Some people think it best to shun daylight, but Herr Holmengraa did not think so, perhaps; goodness knows—at any rate, he had never been shy about hanging round in his own and others' houses.

Wagon-loads of flour kept on moving down the road to the quay the whole afternoon, and late in the evening the mail-boat whistled and came alongside. Herr Holmengraa did not take any part in what went on, did not even go down for a look round—not he. All went well without him; his wharf-manager did wonders in getting sacks of flour loaded—he had taken full charge himself although he had an assistant for the purpose. And why did the wharf-manager act in this unwonted way? This he told no one; but Fru Rasch had been on the quay to meet three north-bound mail-boats in succession, and had stayed till they were dispatched; and each of the three times the wharf-manager himself had taken charge of the loading. She was there again now, and it was quite a sight and an experience to see the tall wharf-manager hurrying to and fro on the quay, giving orders about the flour at the top of his voice. And

a fine, ringing voice he had too; many years ago he had founded the Segelfoss Choral Society and he was its best singer still.

And Fru Rasch? What brought her to the quay so late of an evening? She came down to meet Young Wiliatz in case he came; that was her errand. No one else came to meet him—no! no Holmsen was great in Segelfoss any longer; all alike were great now, and all alike were small. There was Herr Holmengraa, of course, but there was no one else, and Herr Holmengraa was no longer what he had been either. As Fru Rasch stood there ready to receive the last Holmsen, she seemed like a little rock in the sea, a speck in the midst of all the rest. People had other things to think about than her and her errand. For the moment it was the *Segelfoss News,* the last number of which had just come out; it contained a high-flown article about Paster L. Lassen, and the article must have been written by Lawyer Rasch, it was so wonderfully put together, and so people were talking about it for the moment. Pastor L. Lassen, the light of Segelfoss, had begun to invade our neighbour country, Sweden; his learning was spreading wide over the land; he would certainly be a bishop. And here in Segelfoss his old and respected parents were living, and following in the papers the career of their famous son. Wonderfully put together, no one but Lawyer Rasch could have done it—in more than one sense perhaps he was the only one that could. And at the end the article said that Herr Theodore Jensen of Bua ought to have competition in his business.

Here Lawyer Rasch gave expression to a brilliant idea.

But his wife, Fru Rasch, stood, sad to say, listening to the wharf-manager's voice and looking on board the ship for Young Willatz, with nothing else in her little head. And Young Willatz came ashore at last—there he was himself, young, dressed in grey, and quite ordinary. Yes, of course he was a fine, rich gentleman, as he had always liked

to be, and so his patent leather boots were pointed, and the pearl in his tie had a violet tint and was not one of the white kind which may be made of enamel; his travelling-bags, too, were little yellow gems, and nothing less; but he himself went about just the same as other people and he said "Good day!" to Fru Rasch and took off his gloves and shook hands.

Behold! this was no triumphal entry; he made no stir, such as his late father would have made after a long absence. Young Willatz—yes, indeed! a Christmas-night's child he was, and under his arm he had his gold-headed stick—a fine heirloom that, too—but otherwise? And he was a man well known in the country. When he had drawn his glove well on once more, he said "Good day, Julius!" and nodded to Julius, who was standing a little way off. And Julius was quite pleased. "Welcome back again!" answered Julius, and shook the gloved hand. But Young Willatz turned to Fru Rasch again at once, and went on talking and making little jokes with her.

"So you have come at last,"said she; "we have been expecting you with every ship."

"Thank you," he answered; "dear Fru Kirstine," he said, "truly you are the one faithful soul in the world."

"And if it had not been so late now," said she, "you would have to come up to us first and take a cup of tea at least; why have you come so late?"

"Late?" he replied, jesting divinely. "I come to you, Kirstine, at this late hour, I come to my old love, and whisper: 'Open the door to me!' One does not do that before breakfast. Come now, and I'll go with you!"

"Your luggage?" says she.

"The wharf-manager will look after that."

"Yes, but—Rasch is sure to have gone to bed."

"All the better, we'll go into the kitchen."

So there was no putting him off.

And then Martin came forward; he had come with a horse and cart for the baggage. And the two of them walked

away. Fru Rasch, a good-hearted dame with a shawl over her head, and Willatz Holmsen of Segelfoss Manor, musician and bachelor, a man who has come by ship to visit his place once again. No! it was not a triumphal entry.

People stood gossiping on the quay still; the flour went on board fifteen sacks at a time, but the wharf-manager had had his fill of activity, his voice was dumb, for Fru Rasch had gone. Lars Manuelsen went to and fro and spoke to his son of the article in the *Segelfoss News:* it was true, every word of it; folk would do well to remember who Lassen was and who his parents were.

"That was Willatz who came," says Julius; "I shook hands with him." "Yes, that was Willatz," answers others. "He's like his father, he hasn't a beard. But he's taller." "He's about my height," says Julius. "Lassen's a good deal stouter than any of you," says Lars Manuelsen; "you fellows are nothing to what he is!"—Lars Manuelsen walks up and down again, full of one thing only in this world: Willatz of the manor came this evening, but there are many bagmen who carry more money in their pockets than he. What, am I a liar? A musician—worldly vanity and foolery. But Lassen! He played around here as a child, people called him Lars; these paths have borne him; his eyes have seen all these rocks and islands. The cottage-home of his childhood stands here still; his father and mother live there even now." Ah! it was strange to think of Lassen's story. . . .

The mail-boat steamed away; it was far into the night. There are ten cases lying on the wharf addressed to Per of Bua, but Theodore is not to be seen. They were the spring-goods which had arrived, of course, but as there were ten cases only and not a hundred, Theodore did not appear. Julius met Kornelius, the assistant, and said: "The hair-combs have come, ten cases." "You are a donkey!" answered Kornelius snappishly.

But at this late hour of the night Herr Holmengraa was out and about after all. He had had, like other folk, a longing for sun and light, perhaps, and this evening when

all were on the quay and the roads empty, he had wandered out. God knows where he came from; he was on his way home. The sun was shining.

VII

NOW came a glorious time; spring work well and safely over; fields and meadows green; growing weather; rain and warmth. The wide uplands of Segelfoss, the garden with its old trees, the forests round about, the manorial buildings, all lay there together like a rich and luxuriant paradise. What could man want more!

Young Willatz had brought no one with him, but he was a whole party in himself, and it was ever so much livelier on the great estate since the owner had come home. There was the question of food! What was one to give him to eat? Segelfoss had swarmed with serving-folk at all times, and there were no fewer now—they had abundance of food, and beds to sleep on, and big halls to disport themselves in; but if the silly people didn't go and worry themselves now about what Herr Holmsen would eat and drink! He ate and drank what he got, and didn't say a word about it, didn't interfere in any way; "it's not a time for gluttony," he said. In his childhood he had had a riding-horse in the stable, and little Gottfred of the telegraph office, too, to keep it glossy and free of dust; now he had no riding-horse any longer, and wouldn't have one either. "Surely I must be nearly grown up," he said. He had such good sense. And when Martin heard of the Manor-house's dearth of food and offered to shoot birds for Herr Holmsen's table during the close season, he got a furious answer which struck him dumb: "Yes, shoot away! But I'll report you on the spot, do you understand?"

There were not many airs about the owner of Segelfoss.

But so much the better. Hardly had he come home than all the servants looked upon him with respect; he was quiet in his ways in general and did not meddle in every little thing, but he could be very decided too. He had marvellous bodily strength as well; the reapers were amazed at it one day when they were handling a giant grindstone and he came unexpectedly to their assistance. "We must thank you for your help, sir," said the man, Martin, a little abashed. He had noticed Young Willatz's hands—what a great spread they had; and he had caught a glimpse of his wrists—they were of iron.

Young Willatz went to Herr Holmengraa's house and received a hearty welcome. He had not seen Herr Holmengraa for several years and was somewhat struck by the signs of his ageing; his eyes had grown paler in colour and his head drooped. The old gentleman showed unfeigned pleasure, the whole of his good-natured, ordinary face brightened, he welcomed his visitor in the kindest manner. Was he so glad? He made his guest take an easy-chair and rang the bell. To be sure, he was glad. Here was the young man come to him first; the renowned musician—as he was called in the papers—Young Willatz, son of the Lieutenant, come to him first. He had not gone to Lawyer Rasch, or to Pastor Landmarck, but had come to the King first, as was right.

"I took the liberty of ordering your grand piano to be put into my warehouse till you came yourself," he said.

"Thanks, that was very good of you," answered Willatz.

"And now all you have to do is to decide where you wish it put, and I'll set half a hundred of my men to work to shift it carefully. It's to go to the tile-works, I suppose?"

"A thousand thanks," answered Willatz. "Everything has changed here, but your kindness is the same," he said. And it probably did not occur to Young Willatz that this talk of a half a hundred men was only bragging, that Herr Holmengraa had not half a hundred men any longer.

Fru Irgens came in; Herr Holmengraa began by trying

to help his guest to remember who Fru Irgens was, but that was not necessary: his visitor's greeting was full of respect and recognition, and Fru Irgens was quite glad that she had put on a little of the garnet set. Then she brought wine and cakes—some of those famous cakes which melted upon the tongue.

"I wanted to be down on the quay to meet you," said Herr Holmengraa, "and Mariane would have been with me—we had a man on the look-out, but he came back too late."

"That would have been too much!"

"No, it would not have been too much," said Herr Holmengraa gravely.

"Fröken Mariane is at home?"

"Is she upstairs, Fru Irgens?" asked Herr Holmengraa.

"I will see."

"Don't disturb Fröken Holmengraa!" Young Willatz cried after her. "We are not such strangers either. I have met Fröken Holmengraa several times these last years."

"Mariane wrote about that. You were so kind as to take her to the theatre and concerts."

"Felix is in Mexico?"

"Felix is in Mexico and will stay there. He is a seaman, he has been a couple of times to Europe, he was once in Kiel. But he did not come home. He has command of a boat now."

"That's good. I don't know much about it, but it is good, is it not? Considering he is so young?"

"Oh, yes! Yes, he has done very well."

"We others are not achieving anything much," said Young Willatz.

"You have achieved fame," answered Herr Holmengraa. "We read of you in the papers constantly."

Young Willatz smiles faintly and says:

"That does not mean anything. One year follows the other, and here I am. By the by, Herr Holmengraa, your mortgage is quite paid off, isn't it? You have no claims on me?"

"No, I have no claims on you—unfortunately," answers Herr Holmengraa, smiling.

"Thank God!" says Young Willatz, and he too smiles.

"However, there was no need for you to pay me off," said Herr Holmengraa, who was friendliness itself. And goodness knows if the wine he was drinking had not begun to go to his head, for he added: "Not before I was in real need of the money."

Young Willatz answered:

"Then I would certainly have to wait a long time. Oh, no, it was best to settle the matter. But see here, Herr Holmengraa, I know nothing about forests. Can I begin felling in my forest again now?"

Herr Holmengraa weighs the matter and answers in technical terms:

"I think you may deal with certain sizes. The forest has stood untouched ever since your father's time."

"It would not come amiss if I could do so."

"I will go through the forest with pleasure and see what you can cut in the autumn."

"Can I not cut now?"

"Now? No. But in autumn or in winter."

"Oh!" said Young Willatz. "Well, it does not really matter much, but—— It may happen, of course, that I shall not stay here until autumn and winter."

"That won't interfere with the business. The timber is there, it can be felled, sold and taken delivery of. Indeed, with regard to the final matter, about which, of course, there is no hurry—the money, one can get it straight away, if one wants. That's how the timber-trade goes. If one of the forest-owners round here were to come to me for money, he could have all he wanted. Timber always has its value."

Young Willatz looked at Herr Holmengraa and felt his delicacy. Herr Holmengraa added:

"He could get money anywhere he liked, for the matter of that; from the bank here, for example. I have founded a little bank in Segelfoss and made Lawyer Rasch manager;

it has funds at its disposal at present. I have said all this merely to show that it is not necessary for you to be on the spot yourself when you deal in timber.—So we are to lose you in the autumn again, Willatz."

"I don't know. Yes, I am pretty sure I shall have to go. I am at work on something, but I do not know whether I can finish it here. I shall never finish it."

"You'll excuse my calling you Willatz."

"I thank you for doing so."

"I knew your father and mother, I knew you when you were little, and when you came home a young gentleman from England."

"When you gave me a riding-horse."

"I? Oh, yes, a little brown filly; do you remember that still? Well, much more remarkable things have happened to you since then. You are going to work here? Don't forget us, come and see us up here! We haven't things as you have them over at Segelfoss, but we shall be glad if you will come."

The gentlemen touched glasses and drank again. There was no doubt that Herr Holmengraa was moved. The old man had been silent for so long, no doubt, that he felt an impulse to pour out his feelings. He was ever so winning —his bit of bravado about the half-hundred men and the bank had made him all the more modest afterwards and he did not boast again. The poor King in his fine clothes, the poor hero of the fairy-tale! he looked worn—bent; and Young Willatz thought of the entry into Segelfoss many years before, when Herr Holmengraa had appeared in the midst of a golden haze of wonderment and admiration. What had happened since? Nothing; probably neither he himself nor anyone else could point to anything definite. But the fairy-tale was ended.

"A man came to me this morning and wished to pay me some money," said Young Willatz. "Jensen, Theodore Jensen, Theodore of Bua, he is a grown man now. He came this morning early."

Herr Holmengraa listened as though surprised.

"He has been drying fish on my rocks, and now he wished to pay me for it. He owed me for six years, he said."

"Indeed! Oh, yes, little Theodore is not such a bad fellow!" said Herr Holmengraa.

"I asked whether he had used up my rocks, worn holes in them. No, he had not done that. Well, then I don't think we will say anything about payment!"

"To be sure," said Herr Holmengraa. "But it is, of course, the custom to pay rent for the rocks, and Theodore remembered that, no doubt."

"He wanted to buy land, too. He didn't own a foot of land, he said; his store and a bakery, and so on, stood on yours; his father had put up a boat-shed on mine—well, he hadn't a foot of land, and might he buy some? I will think it over, I said. But, look here, Herr Holmengraa, I don't want to sell any land."

"Theodore mustn't come worring you with such matters. I will tell him so."

"It didn't matter. Besides, I got a good impression of the man—he seemed straightforward. The solicitor wishes to start a rival trader here, he said, but if he did, there would not be a livelihood for anyone. So he wished to buy up the ground and the shore-frontage in order to shut out competition."

Herr Holmengraa smiled indulgently.

"He hasn't means enough for that," said he. "That's flying a bit too high on the good Theodore's part. But his reasoning is sound. There is not a proper livelihood for two here yet."

Mariane came in—in came Mariane! Both gentlemen rose and Young Willatz went to meet her; their meeting gave promise of being something out of the ordinary, but nothing came of it. The two young people were well known to one another, they spoke familiarly as in their childhood, and chattered easily and amicably—the dark girl was slim and white-clad; Willatz likened her to a carnation in a silver

bottle. All laughed heartily at this. "In a silver brandy-bottle," said Mariane.

"Have you come alone?" she asked. "Haven't you a large following?"

"I'm a whole host in myself, I can tell you," said he. "But Anton Coldevin is coming later."

"We've bought an ox for you to eat up."

"Herr Holmengraa, your daughter always sets me some hard task or other. As a rule it is to thump the piano for her."

Herr Holmengraa only smiled quietly at them both—smiled at the children.

She spoke of the small events of the household: "I can tell you things are happening here—ten chickens under one hen and only the eleventh egg rotten!" She talked the dialect of the district more and more and was not particular how her words were chosen. Was this from love of slang, or was it cunning? She said to her father: "Well, at last I've given the hens the corn I should have given them yesterday!" At the same moment she turned to Willatz and asked: "Wouldn't you like to have a little fruit?"

"I think we are very well as we are."

"Yes, but a little fruit! Then Fru Irgens will be able to come in with a silver dish—that's a great moment for her. Oh! she was crying about the key again to-day, papa. You must know, Willatz, that Fru Irgens has lost a little bit of a storehouse key, and it will be the death of her."

Fröken Mariane rang for fruit.

"So we are to have a theatre here," said Willatz. "The aforesaid young Theodore told me that he is building a theatre. He made excuses for building it on my land."

"Isn't that like Theodore!" said Herr Holmengraa. "It's quite true that he's enlarging the boat-shed into a sort of entertainment hall. It stands on your ground."

"He seems to be quite a character, this Theodore; I remember him when he was just *so* high, and nobody."

"He's a clever youth in a way. And he seems to have luck with him."

"By the way, why shouldn't he be allowed to buy land and shut out competition? It isn't valuable land, is it?"

"Oh, well! That, of course, depends on what you ask for it, but it is dear land, valuable land. Building-lots here in Segelfoss cost something quite different now from what they did before."

"For that I may thank you, Herr Holmengraa. However, I don't mean to sell any land."

The fruit came in—grapes and apples on a silver dish. Mariane said roguishly:

"Fru Irgens, papa says you mustn't worry about that key."

"No, no!" answered Fru Irgens, evasively.

"No, for after all it's a key and nothing more."

But that was too much; Fru Irgens answered:

"The master is always saying I mustn't worry myself about it, but that doesn't make it less distressing for me. To think that I can't think out or imagine where it has gone to!"

All laughed, even Fru Irgens had to smile too, and Herr Holmengraa tried to comfort her by saying there were no thieves here.

"Don't joke about it!" she warned him. "Besides, the master is altogether too good-natured. There are some folk I wouldn't have in the servants' quarters any longer if I could get rid of them."

"Who are they?"

"Well, first and foremost, Konrad."

Herr Holmengraa winced; Konrad was the day-labourer, the workman who could not be got rid of without the mill-hands making common cause with him and striking. Herr Holmengraa said:

"Things have gone all right lately."

"Yes, but it seems as if the trouble were about to begin again."

Herr Holmengraa forced himself to show a cheerful

countenance, but he was evidently uneasy. He sat thinking for a while, then he begged to be excused and followed Fru Irgens out of the room.

The two young people were left alone.

Young Willatz was on the point of saying something; he probable thought they could go on as they had begun —chatting about indifferent matters—but he made a mistake; Mariane asked suddenly, her face growing pale:

"Why have I not heard from you? Does it mean that you are a shabby wretch?"

He had expected some sort of trouble, maybe; yet he did not find the right answer at once; he looked at her in surprise.

"Gently!" he said, and got up. "I took you at your last word."

"What word? That I wouldn't?"

"Yes, that you would not."

"Oh, is that it!" said she. "But it was your own fault that I said it; you worried me."

"And it was your fault I worried you; you were playing with me."

"No, you're lying!" she hissed, and her Indian face was full of fury.

Then Young Willatz smiled and said:

"It's very difficult to pretend to feel what one doesn't. You are not really a bit angry."

Mariane recovered herself. Yes, indeed, she had really been angry enough, but his words checked her.

"Yes, I am angry," she said; "horribly angry. I have not deserved it of you. What did it matter if I did say it? Be quiet! I don't remember what his name was, even! Do you remember? What kind of a man was he?"

"You mean the last?"

"Were there more than one? For heaven's sake, stop! You are horrible! I have never played with you—never played. There's no having and holding you, either."

"There may be something in that," he replied.

But he did not mean it, probably; Young Willatz felt he

was obviously in the right, and he was offended. There was something stupidly English about him, and she was passionate and reckless.

"You are more jealous than a girl, really," said she. "I sit on pins and needles whenever I am with you. What kind of a man was he, I ask?"

Young Willatz shrugged his shoulders. But he began to see that he had hurt her; he had not seen her so much in earnest before, perhaps; he wished to smooth things out, so he seated himself again and said:

"It is not worth talking about any more."

"Talking about! What have I done? Tell me that!"

"Done? Oh, don't let us make too much of it! As a matter of fact, you do a good many things—you collect a circle of men round you by talking to them and looking at them. Isn't that enough? Must I catch you at something more definite?"

"I talk and look. Can I help being like that?"

"Well, yes! You could help it a little," he answered, much more gently. "If you *know* that you are so all-powerful, you needn't perform the miracle all the time."

"I will try to give it up," said she, and smiled as if repentant.

"For you spoil so much for me."

"I will try and stop, Willatz."

"Yes, do!" he said.

A lovers' tiff and nothing more, when all was said and done—the usual sweethearts' quarrel which ended well, this time as before. They were accustomed to quarrelling, evidently, they made it up so easily. Mariane declared at last that it was she who was jealous. "I'm sorry to say," she said, "it's when you sit and play before all these women and they can't take their eyes off you, and sit there longing for you. Yes, I've seen it. Then, of course, I have to go and do something too!"

Plain, if naughty speaking! They took up their glasses, and Young Willatz drank without raising his eyes; but

Fröken Mariane was on the alert, and over the edge of her glass she darted a swift glance—a lightning glance—through her all but close-shut lids. Through her hair was stuck a little silver fork—quite unfashionable—and the fork had only two prongs; very tiny ones, a mere split in the shaft, like a serpent's tongue.

Then Willatz left, promising to come again soon. He went to the telegraph station to see Baardsen. Little Gottfred was there too—a nice polite lad, and telegraph-clerk at the station—but Baardsen interested Willatz most. He had grown somewhat grey and was as shabby as ever, but what a burly fellow he was, and with just the same shoulders! The 'cello stood in the corner; Baardsen was on his feet and on the point of going out, but he took his hat off again, and offered Willatz a chair.

"Excuse its being a wooden chair only," he said. And he seemed to have no objection to the visit; he was polite and entertaining, a well-mannered man: "Wooden chairs are not so bad, and these ones are the same as all others. They creak and are hard; the glue has been loose as long as I can remember, and they groan horribly when one sits down upon them; but they never seem to get any worse, they never grow quite unusable. They're funny.—I have followed your career with greatest interest, Herr Holmsen. I do not know much about your art, but I have read about you."

"Why, you practise the art yourself. I remember your beautiful 'cello-playing well."

Baardsen cast a look at his instrument, but turned his head away at once.

"You are going to settle down here for the summer?"

"Yes. And you must come over to me again; we will play together. I know a little more now than last time."

"Yes, thanks, I will do so gladly."

"And you too, Gottfred."

Gottfred was modest and merely bowed his respectful thanks. He remained standing the whole time.

"May I look at your 'cello once more?" said Willatz. The 'cello was handed to him and he touched the strings and admired it sincerely: "It is a wonderful instrument!"

"To me it is like a little fellow-creature!" said Baardsen, speaking of his 'cello lovingly and feelingly. "A telegraphist and a 'cello!" he said with self-irony. "But it is not a bad combination. We two sit here and draw out happiness. And our good Gottfred believes in us and listens to us and admires us. So here we sit and feel uplifted; the Pleiades sing to Orion's Nebula.—Your fields and meadows are looking fine this year, Herr Holmsen."

Only now did Willatz notice that Baardsen was growing a little strange in his speech. He answered, yes; that the year promised well.

"But your father ought to have been in the landscape on his horse."

"Yes."

Baardsen sat playing thoughtfully with a knife, one of those magic knives whose blades vanish into the hilt when you strike with it. When he noticed that Willatz was growing uneasy, he laid the knife back upon the table.

"Yes, and your mother," said he. "She rode splendidly. It was a great time altogether—a grand time, when first I came here!—Have you met Pastor Landmarck?"

"Not yet."

"I happened to think of him. He is somewhat different from the folk here, so he is sure to bring upon himself the indulgence of his parishioners. I think it very amusing that he goes in for carpentry. He is artisan and priest—did one ever hear of such a mixture! But after all how do we know what sort of mixture is being made of us? The aristocrats are dead. Not more than a hundred years ago we were still looking up to the aristocrats; now they are not to be seen—they are invisible in the land—compassion has to seek them out. I don't know—the world is the gainer, perhaps—it is not my business; but perhaps Spartacus will have to be overcome again—it is not impossible—as he

was before. The world will be the better for that, maybe. But, anyhow, Pastor Landmarck is a curiosity in the way of a mixture, one which owes its existence to an upheaval."

Young Willatz rose to go:

"Well, then, you gentlemen will come over and see me. I live at the rooms in the tile-works mostly."

Baardsen followed him, and when he got outside he put his hat on.

"I must go over to my workmen," he said, smiling. "Theodore Jensen is building a theatre and I am his architect." He lifted his hat and swung indomitably along the path to the boat-shed.

As Young Willatz went past the store, Theodore popped out of a hiding-place, evidently wanting to speak to him. This was the second time to-day, and Willatz wished to pass on. He read with astonishment on a new signpost on the store: "P. Jensen, Draper & Grocer." The lettering was in gold.

"I suppose it would be too much to ask you into our shop," said Theodore. "So that you may get an idea of the extent of the business." Willatz frowned a little and looked at his watch.

"Another time," he said.

"I thought that you would then see how necessary it is for us to add to our premises, and we have no ground, no land for building on. If you would be so good as to have a look from the door-step only, if nothing more."

"I don't know why I should," said Willatz unwillingly, but giving way and going with Theodore.

Ah! Theodore! he was wide-awake—he made use of his opportunities! The mere sight of young Herr Holmsen, of the returned landowner at his side—that alone was worth much, he could not have come at a better time. The new goods had arrived—fine, costly wares—there was no room for them, they lay in masses everywhere, and the store was full of people. Wasn't it evident that Theodore needed more room?

"Be so good as to look here, for example," said Theodore, pointing. "The drapery department, there where the stuffs and dresses are, every bit of it is too small!" said Theodore.

People turned towards the door and looked at the two; of course, Willatz could not stand there and squint sidewise through a doorway; he was forced to enter, and Theodore made way for him, and threw open the flap in the counter, too—but: "No, thank you"; Willatz stopped by the door.

Yes, the store was too small to-day certainly; the spring goods had drawn a full house; it was packed with people, and money clinked in every hand. The women routed and dug among the new dress-stuffs and ready-made blouses; women and girls alike carried away, alike excited, by the sight of all this finery, by these muslins and so-called silks from Switzerland. It was an orgy, a servant-girls' festival. Yes, Theodore knew what he was about—he brought the world to Segelfoss! What were those little things in at least ten cardboard boxes standing in a row? Hair-combs, back-combs for the hair, ornaments of celluloid at prices within the reach of all. And there were hand-bags with silver-plated chains to hold them by; and there were yellow shoes of imitation leather with big gold-bronze buckles across the instep. Collars? Yes, of every variety and of every colour: Mary Stuarts and Sætersdalens. A candidate for confirmation is buying a writing-set—much of it is silver, with holy angels to hold up the pen-holders, and the ink-pot on a plated stand with a place on which to engrave the owner's name.

The men, from old habit, are collected down by the former wine-bar. Wine and beer were forbidden now—but it wasn't forbidden to buy naphtha and hair-wash for inward application, nor was it forbidden to meet a bosom friend at the wine-bar and give him a pull at a bottle out of one's pocket. But it was very different from the old days; there was not even room to stagger about decently,, there was such a crowd of these womenfolk.

The trade in hair-combs is very brisk. There was a

hair-comb with a red glass bead—the only comb with a bead; it was amongst the others, it must have got there by mistake, Kornelius puts it in a class by itself. "Why? What does it cost? Aye, but I want it!" Though young Theodore is fine society, he has his eyes about him all the same; he shouts: "That hair-comb with the red stone is not for sale!"

Young Willatz turns his head. That girl with the red hair, who was she? He knows Daverdana again; she served at the Manor when he was quite a small boy; she has such lovely copper-red hair. She is engrossed with her buying.

"Can't I buy the comb?" says she.

"What do you want with it?" asks Kornelius. "It's a yellow comb and doesn't suit you."

"Yes, but it has a red stone."

Kornelius lays the comb aside.

"Then I suppose Theodore is going to give it away to someone?" Daverdana asks bluntly.

Theodore hears and changes his mind. He wishes to show that he is a great man, maybe; that a hair-comb more or less is of little account with him; perhaps he was afraid, too, that Daverdana's tongue might be as unbridled at times as that of Julius.

"Oh, well, let her have the comb!" he shouts.

That is how Daverdana came to buy the hair-comb with the red glass bead.

"Our firm does everything it can to please customers," said Theodore, turning to Willatz. "We find that is the best way in the long run. And now I will beg you to think over my request and let me know later. As you may see, it is nothing but ill will on Lawyer Rasch's part to wish to bring in a competitor here and ruin our flourishing trade."

Theodore talked on. Some young girls had gathered round a piece of yellow wearing-apparel of Swiss silk trimmed with black ribbon and gold tassels—a gorgeous affair, a thing of dazzling beauty, airy and light as a fairy cloak of tissue-paper, yet meant to be worn as an outer garment.

A girl with a woollen shawl over her mouth because of toothache, wished to have the treasure, but the others dissuaded her; the cloak was so dear, and, to tell the truth, a little too fine—"What are you thinking of, Florina!" But Florina, no doubt, had her own ideas, and, as to the price, she did not conceal the fact that she had money enough for that and more. She took the shawl from her mouth and asked:

"What does one use the cloak for?"

Kornelius could not help laughing. What does one use a cloak for? This was no night-dress, she might be sure; a yellow silk cloak was for summer wear when winter cloaks were too warm, and this cloak was of a fashionable shape, as worn by ladies nowadays.

"That's not what she wants to know," broke in Theodore with his important air. "I take it you wish to know when you can use this cloak, Florina! You can use that cloak at any time except when you are going to communion and must be dressed in black. Otherwise you can use it at any time. It is a fine thing, and you'll be the only one in our parts with such a cloak.—But will you not come inside the counter, Herr Holmsen?"

Willatz has at last been discovered by the men at the wine-bar; one after the other comes forward to greet him and takes him by the hand, and Willatz cannot escape, so it was well that he had gloves on. They spoke of his father; splendid in his own way, a little quick-tempered, but cool again in a moment, a gentleman. They had touched their hats to the Lieutenant often, and he had acknowledged their salutes and nodded. He rode always, and his horse was brown with a light-coloured mane. Willatz's mother, too, the lady of the Manor, she sang in church; such singing had never been heard since her days. And Segelfoss Manor was a good place to come to for help, 'deed it was. And now God had called both of them——

"If we got a strip of ground from the store here to the boat-shed, we should be safe," said Theodore.

"And they rest in their graves now," said the men. "Ah,

yes, that's the way with all of us human beings! And you yourself, sir, you're very well?"

Willatz nodded to the men and went out. He had said scarcely a word. He went to the tile-works, to those two rooms which were to shelter him throughout an absorbing task, a great piece of work—he had no intention of spending his time here in idling from morning to night; no, he was going to do serious work! The grand piano had already come; Pauline had unpacked his clothes; dumb-bells and trapeze were there already from the last time he was at home; all was in order. On the walls hung guns and revolvers, fishing-rods and knives, rare musical instruments, flutes, ocarinas, perforated shells, mussels, conchs to play upon. Now he unpacked the rest of his boxes himself—he had brought with him a variety of brushes for his finger-nails, and three dozen silk socks and other things fit to put on. Some articles of onyx were to have a place upon the table; a flask of golden frosted glass did not match the other things, and had to be put upon a shelf. He had drawing-materials with him too, brushes and tubes—why not? His mother had also given some of her time to drawing; the two arts went together, no doubt. At last all was arranged to his satisfaction and everything in its place, and he took possession of the rooms, his father's two rooms, where Young Willatz was going to play and compose, and work like mad. And if he didn't accomplish something here, he never would.

VIII

OLD Katrina of Sagvika has had a strange experience. She sees one day that a strange pair of magpies come to her old birch-trees, fly about them, chattering to one another, pick out one of the trees, and, in all haste, start to build a nest in it. Yet it was so late in the year now, that other magpies had finished long since both with nesting and

hatching—what could this mean? Katrina had heard of Lars Manuelsen's magpies, that they had been turned out of house and home and all their young ones killed—she wouldn't deny house-room in her birch-trees to any homeless pair of magpies, of whatever nationality they might be. She spoke to Bertel of it, too, and Bertel was not so very delighted at the thought of housing all manner of strange magpies, the more so as they had had a nest on the place before; but he came round a little when the new magpie-pair laid their eggs and hatched their young in an incredible hurry and settled down for good.

Yes, it was true that they had had a magpie-nest at Sagvika before. Magpies could live in peace here, and the same magpie-pair came to the nest every year, cast out rotten twigs and worked in new, and looked upon the place as their home. As long as the children, little Gottfred and little Pauline, were at home, it was such fun for them to have magpies with their busy, happy life about the cottage; and in the autumn at the killing-time it was great fun to see the magpie over on the common struggling backwards with a long bit of gut.

But that was past now.

"And to house Lars Manuelsen's magpies is quite another matter," said Bertel; "and I've a very good mind to go up and put an end to them to-night," said he.

Katrina was sitting sewing sacks for the mill as usual, and now she looked up at Bertel with horror. She had evidently seldom seen him so angry, since it distressed her so much.

"And where's the piece of soap?" asked Bertel, still angrily.

And now Katrina must own that she had forgotten the piece of soap down by the brook to-day, and when she went back for it, it was gone.

"Hm!" said Bertel, almost gnashing his teeth. "The magpie has taken it!" said he. "These are fine magpies you've got to the place, and I'll look out a knife this very moment," he said.

"Good gracious! how you do talk!" said Katrina.

"Talk! I come home from work and want to clean myself, but no! the magpie has taken the soap!" Bertel goes up to his old wife with a threatening air and says: "And can you tell me what that magpie of yours is going to use the soap for? Will she eat it? or will she use it for a pillow?"

And since Bertel was no smooth and dapper man, but, on the contrary, a bearded and bristly man, it sounded exactly as if he were in dead earnest when he said this. But his wife began to have her doubts, possibly; she looked up again, and, as Bertel had to turn his face away from her, in a moment she was certain. Then she burst out laughing, yes, she laughed till the tears rolled down, while she said "Pillow! pillow!" over and over again. But Bertel coughed hard and went out of the door and did not come in again for some time.

Bless me, what a good-natured, playful fellow Bertel had become in his old age! And it had come about all through his having steady work and earning what he needed, and having a life free from care. And most of all through his children having behaved well and grown up to be a credit to him.

Here now comes Pauline home to the cottage after her work at the Manor is done, to chat with them for a while. She brought news of a dance to be held in the boat-shed to-night, though the boat-shed is no boat-shed now, but a theatre and a place of entertainment, and it was there the dancing was to be. Theodore of Bua had wished to inaugurate the new house with a jollification; yes, he had hoisted the flag on the place and had it up all day. Of course, Pauline's mother told the story of the bit of soap, and now Bertel himself joined in the laugh.

When, some time later, Pauline left home, she met girls and lads on their way to the dance, and among them was the girl Florina in her yellow silk cloak, and—yes—Nils of Vælta was with her; and the girl Marcilie, who was in service at Herr Holmengraa's again, is in company with the day-

labourer Konrad. "Aren't you going to the dance, Pauline?" they asked. "No," answered Pauline. "Oh! you have grown so uppish," said they, laughing, and then added: "Don't you think Willatz can do without you for an hour?"

That was not it, for Willatz himself had bidden her go, when he heard of the dance. "But Herr Willatz must have meant that for a joke," said Fru Rasch, "for one doesn't go to dances in the town when one is housekeeper at Segelfoss Manor and has a brother in Gottfred's position at the telegraph station." "But it is quite a different matter for you to go when there's a theatre here," said Fru Rasch. "For there is a theatre company coming here and you can go then, for both Rasch and I shall go and Doctor Muus and some of the pastor's family, and Herr Willatz will go himself, perhaps."—Fru Rasch gave her old pupil instruction on many points still, and little Pauline benefited by it.

Throughout the night, people wandered to and fro down on the big road. Willatz was up in his bedroom at the Manor and saw them—lads and lasses, lovers and rivals—all going to or coming from the dance. Now and again he heard shrieks, obstreperous shouts flung abroad, and Willatz could not remember to have heard shouting down on the road in his father's and his mother's time. In the morning his man, Martin, had a fight among the lads to tell of—a couple of the workmen at the mill—and one had used a stone. The girl was Palestina. The sheriff had been sent for and he had come; the sheriff of Ura, the old debt-ridden man, who had other things to think about; he came and made peace and got the lads to make it up between them, and as he did not wish to disturb folk in the middle of the night by begging shelter, he had stayed up till morning. Then he went to the solicitor.

He had brought all the money he could scrape together; the solicitor would have some consideration surely and not ask the impossible—had not the sheriff been at his wedding? He took off his cap with the gold band and remained standing. And Lawyer Rasch seemed to become more amenable

in the face of this great humility; for he was not inhuman after all, if only he could have the upper hand.

"I accept this payment on account," he said, "but you will be answerable for interest on the rest."

"Yes," said the sheriff.

"But, at the same time, I must tell you that I am not the bank. The bank gives you a month's extension of time."

"Yes, thank you."

Lawyer Rasch sat fat and solid in his chair and the sheriff stood. But Lawyer Rasch appreciated humility when he met with it, so he rose and said:

"Come in with me and have a little breakfast, Sheriff. You must need it!"

And the gentlemen went in to breakfast. But when the sheriff had had something to eat and some coffee, he plucked up a little heart, and talked calmly with the lady of the house, and was politely communicative. "When I was at your wedding," said he. Was he forgetting his humility already? Said Lawyer Rasch:

"By the by: when the county-auditor makes you a visit of inspection, Sheriff, what then? Have you thought of that?"

And though the sheriff had thought of little else for some time past, nevertheless he was taken aback by the rude question; and so was Fru Rasch—she poured out another cup of coffee for the sheriff.

"The auditor has inspected me before," said he.

"And found the accounts in order? Well, then I'll only hope that he may not find anything to take exception to this time either," said Lawyer Rasch in an offended tone. "As I said, the bank can wait a month, not longer."

But the old sheriff of Ura was really rather too easy-going —Lawyer Rasch was right as to that. He could easily have kept his accounts in order if he had known his business better and had been able to skin his debtors. Many of the farms and houses he passed as he took his homeward way that forenoon, he knew well; he had debtors dwelling in

them, he was sure they could bring him a sheep or a goat on account if they wished, but they never wished. That's how folk were now. People had owed him money all the time he had been here; but they could not pay before, while they would not now. For many years now Herr Holmengraa and the flour-mill had brought work and ready money into the district; but the money vanished easily, it disappeared in all sorts of purchases at Per of Bua's counter. The young folk spent many times more than they used to on clothes and finery and cigarettes, and made themselves modern in every bad sense of the word, but in character-development there had been no advance. And as to making more out of his office? Bless you, the sheriff could have fleeced people and made money—he could often and often have fined Theodore of Bua for unlawful wine-selling and himself have taken half the fine.

The sheriff goes into Nils the shoemaker's cottage, and Nils is at home and has nothing to do but pass the time sitting on a stool or in bed. Ah, the old shoemaker himself had caught the taint of the times! Down to him from heaven had dropped a mint of money in the spring, and had not Gottfred of the telegraph station come and demanded some of this money for the office cash-box, Nils the shoemaker would now have been sitting in America and eating meat three times a day. But, as it was, nothing came of the journey to America, and Nils began to buy himself a little better food that he might put some flesh on his bones. The poor fellow stood in need of it, too. But the worst of it was that he became demoralized and needed yet more good food; and one thing led to another, so that he must use much stronger coffee than before, and he got a taste for a little foreign cheese from the store. It became infatuation, an obsession with the shoemaker—he could not make out how he had supported life when he had no canned goods. Fresh croquettes were to be had in the middle of summer now, and bright tins full of fish! Nils himself might have rowed a few hundred yards out over the bay and hauled fish out of

the sea—there were haddocks and flounders and coal-fish; but why should he? There was tinned fish to be had at the store—delicacies which were made the tastier by lying in layers and getting sodden with oil. Nils the shoemaker had lived two generations in frugality and want and great content—now the times had caught him with their new luxuries and twisted him out of knowledge of himself. It went so far that he did not roast his own coffee, but bought it roasted by the packet; and, then, what the devil should he sit and grind his coffee for, when he could get ground coffee in silver paper, stamped all over? He had got as far as that; there was no knowing how much further he might go. Nils the shoemaker was spending his money gallantly!

"I was thinking of having you home with me to work for a while," said the sheriff. "We shall soon have nothing to put on our feet."

"There are all kinds of footgear to be had at the store," answered Nils, "and they are much finer."

"But then I'm so old-fashioned as to have most faith in your boots," said the sheriff.

"I can't see any more," answered Nils.

"You can see well enough for the work I have for you."

"No."

The sheriff stared at Nils in astonishment, and did not know him for the same man again. As was his way, he went to work gently and talked kindly and reasonably, but the shoemaker shook his head. At length he said:

"And, besides, I'm engaged to sell tickets at the theatre."

That settled it. Nils the shoemaker was not to be moved. When he got this job, this engagement from Theodore of Bua, it seemed as if he would have work for the rest of his life, and must not waste his energies on other things. He had sat in the ticket-box and sold tickets for the dance the night before, and had got on splendidly; people had come to him as to a regular tradesman, he had given out tickets and got money for them, and this morning when he had given over the takings, Theodore had flung a two-crown bit

over the table to him and said: "Here you are, that is for your work." "And come again when we have the real theatre!" said Theodore.

Whereupon Theodore had gone his way, he was so busy.

It turned out that there was much to do about this theatre. An advertisement had been in the *Segelfoss News* a couple of times already and was to appear again to-morrow; printed placards were posted up in the shop; the flag had waved night and day over the play house; red, green and white tickets had been printed. Theodore himself had egged people on with stirring descriptions of the play: "They are to play 'The Serpent in its Lair'; a magnificent piece; it's by Björnson or someone else; at any rate, it's thought a great deal of. And the Serpent is not a serpent—you mustn't think it is; for the Serpent is a human being like you and me. I've put up the house in order that we may have a look at it; you must all buy tickets; we're not going to be behind other towns, I can tell you!"

But there was one thing lacking—a little notice in the paper. An advertisement was there, but no notice. Theodore went to the editor and asked what was the meaning of that. Had his firm not advertised steadily in the paper? The editor was in a fix.—"A notice! Oh, yes, of course one would appear!" But it did not. Theodore went again to the office.—"The notice! Oh, yes; but the solicitor had not time to write it."—"Was the solicitor to write it?"—"Yes. And he had thought the actors should be on the spot first."

Theodore got no further—he was faced by superior force. He might bully the editor, he might withdraw his firm's advertisement from the paper now and forever—it would be useless; it was clear that Lawyer Rasch was the owner of the *Segelfoss News*. Devil take this overfed solicitor!

Theodore bit his lip and, being young and having all his teeth, he bit hard. Not that he was by any means at his wit's end—in a moment a little idea flew through his nimble brain; he knew of a girl with a woollen shawl about her

mouth, and that girl made no secret of a bank-book she had —but where had it come from? There was no hurry—wait a little; let the solicitor write the notice or forget it—he could take his choice.

And after all there was not so much at stake for Theodore either; he let out his building and would get his rent—as a creditor, he had priority. And it was as well to keep peace with the paper, if only for the sake of later theatrical performances.

The actors came, Theodore hoisted the flags; the troupe found quarters in Larsen's Hotel—seven persons, old and young; a leading lady, a manager, a treasurer. Julius wished to show that this distinguished company had come to decent people—yes, indeed, to a famous house. He had got his brother's, L. Lassen's, picture framed and hung up in the dining-hall. By a lucky chance this picture had just been brought out by the Lutheran Publishing Society and the pastor had straightway sent a copy to his dear ones, inscribed with dedication and signature. Here it hung, framed and glazed—the pastor in his gown and bands. The actors looked at it, and Lars Manuelsen, who had brought in their baggage, lost no time in saying: "That's my son!"

"Gracious!" said one of the actors. And when the others heard the ejaculation, they looked at one another and bit their fingers, while the ladies stuffed their handkerchiefs into their mouths. Their behaviour was really very odd.

"You've heard of Lassen, I suppose, sir?" asked Lars Manuelsen.

"Yes—yes, of course; who hasn't? Lassen!"

Then the actors went out. And wasn't it a sight for the birds of the air and men on the earth—to behold their gait, their garments and their manners! The gentlemen had their hats cocked on one side and went humming for very light-heartedness and repletion; and then the manager had a red and green necktie, which shed over him a glow of good breeding and acquaintance with the great world. One of them sang of

"—his hairy paw
And a flush of brandy on his jaw."

Pure light-heartedness and nothing else—vigour, power and gladness. Segelfoss gazed bewildered at the company.

But the leading lady was not more beautiful than the other two ladies; on the contrary, there was a tall, brown girl with a deep voice who was the most beautiful of all; she walked like a proud queen and raised her skirt a little, and at the bottom of it there was a trimming of silk, which was meant to rustle. Her name was Fröken Sibyl Engel on the bills; that was her professional name, no doubt. And she was the prettiest. But no doubt the leading lady had the advantage in another way, in the way of art, the great art of acting, and that was the main thing. She wore an enormous hat and was called Fru Lydia, and nothing else; and there was no denying that the leading lady was an imposing woman with a fine figure.

First of all they wanted to go to the store. "Is it over there that Herr Theodore Jensen lives? Thanks!" They entered the shop with a whole armful of thanks. There were so many of them that Theodore could not open the counter-flap for them, but he took off his hat and received them politely. They could not thank him enough for his help, and how did things shape? Was everything in order? What, no notice? And the paper coming out this very afternoon? Oh, Lord! then they must hurry to the solicitor, this blessed solicitor—was Rasch his name? The leading lady and the manager started off at once. In the meanwhile the rest of the troupe made their way to the theatre accompanied by Theodore.

"You have a flag up, what is that for?" they asked him.

"For you, for the occasion," answered Theodore.

"May we thank you once more for all you have done?" they said.

Theodore of Bua was not such a bad chap; indeed, he was a clever fellow, and he made a good impression. The

ribbon-bows in his shoes did their part perhaps, but the big gold twenty-crown bit, stuck in his necktie, no doubt did yet more. "Our firm," said he. "That is my sloop and my fish you see out yonder," he said.

"Oh, Lord: there I've twisted my leg again!" cried Fröken Sibyl Engel, catching Theodore's arm. "Let me lean on your arm!" she begged.

Theodore had never given his arm to a lady before, probably, and he did not know how to go about it, but Mademoiselle Sibyl gave his arm a little jerk and put matters right.

"It's a bad road," he said, by way of excuse, "but it's going to be improved!"

"It isn't the fault of the road," said Sibyl.

The others did not show her any sympathy, but smiled a little, just as though Fröken Sibyl sprained her ankle and took hold of an arm now and again, whenever there was a chance.

They entered the building. Nils the shoemaker was seated in the ticket-box. He was making sure that everything was in order, no doubt.

"This is the ticket-clerk," said Theodore. "But it's not to-day, Nils."

"No, I just came here."

"Have you the tickets in the locker? Be sure you don't let anyone break in!" said Theodore, with an air of importance and circumspection. "Now, do you understand, Nils: the red are a crown and a half, the green are one crown, and the white are three-quarters of a crown. And don't pick up two at a time!"

They went into the hall. "Splendid!" said the artists. "The stage the right height, the rows of benches, the walls, yes, everything as it should be. You've had experts at work, Herr Jensen! Now, behind the stage; two rooms—good gracious, Herr Jensen, you're a perfect wonder; I shall love you till my dying day; two rooms—we have to be content with a curtain almost everywhere, and you don't know

what two rooms mean to me! Lamps, reflectors! I don't understand where you got everything from! Well, if we can't act here, we can't anywhere."

All agreed, and Theodore swelled with gratification. Yes, he had taken a lot of trouble and thought out everything in the best possible way. The only thing was these things at the sides—what are they called? . . .

"Wings?"

"Wings. I couldn't think of it. Perhaps we haven't enough of them, enough wings. But we'll get them. And plenty of scenery too. It's lucky the action of your play takes place in one room."

"Do you know the play?"

Theodore smiled:

"One knows a little about it. The Serpent is no snake, of course, but a human being."

"Yes, but the whole of the action is not in one room," says one of the actors named Max. Perhaps he was getting annoyed at Fröken Sibyl needing another man's arm so long.

Theodore, to save himself, says:

"I don't know the play. It was Baardsen who said so. Or he said, maybe, that some of it takes place outside the room, on the road. We have the background here. This one!"

"Oh, yes, that one! that's fine; it will do splendidly. Who is Baardsen?"

"He's the head of the telegraph office."

"We have some scenery with us," said the actor Max again. "We'll get along all right here, as we do everywhere." —The man was certainly jealous.

On the way home they met the leading lady and the manager. They had spoken with Lawyer Rasch and got a promise that he would remind the editor about a notice in the paper. It was not the lawyer himself who edited the *Segelfoss News*—they must not think that—but he would speak to the editor.

Then all the players went back to the theatre, to the stage,

to their world, to show its splendours to the two who had not seen it yet. And Theodore went too. He received the same praises over again, and he replied: "I have done my best!" But the two who had been to the solicitor suddenly asked about Baardsen: should they not go and thank Baardsen, the head telegraphist, too? "Certainly, if you like," answered Theodore. Baardsen? Of course he had been helpful; Theodore had not had time to be on the spot always while the work was going on.

The malicious solicitor!

So they turned homeward, but Theodore no longer swelled with pride. The others saw that—they saw it very clearly—and they went right home with Herr Theodore, yes, right into his store, to put him into a good humour again; and Sibyl hung on his arm and limped heavily. But, in the store, there was the telegraphist himself, buying a few pence' worth of tobacco—yes, there was Baardsen himself.

So full is life of chance and fate!

He stood there at the counter searching for some small coins in his waistcoat pocket and was just on the point of paying when Theodore said:

"The actors wish to thank you, Baardsen."

Baardsen turned his shoulders slowly and became aware of the company—the seven strangers with their love of life and their hats cocked on one side and their rustling finery. The manager stepped forward, and after him came the two most important of the ladies, and last came the gentlemen; they all talked and smiled and pressed his hand. Theodore went into his office. Then the least important of the actresses—one who had not spoken before—said:

"But where are we to get the piano from?"

Dead silence. They had forgotten the piano.

"You're right, Clara!" said the manager. And to Baardsen he said: "This is Fröken Clara, the pianiste."

Baardsen looked at her, at her young, eager face and her long musician's hands with their blue veins.

"The notice we had was too short," said Baardsen. "But

Herr Theodore will get a piano by the next time you come, I'm sure you can trust him for that."

A shadow passed over Fröken Clara's face. She was probably an unreasonable lady, and did not take into account that she was the least important of the troupe. Baardsen talked a little to her about music and learnt whom she had played with and that she had had a scholarship once. Indeed! But she was an actress, too; in fact she preferred acting.

Theodore came out of his office waving a letter he held in his hand. The smart lad—if only he had not been such a fool! Here he is with this letter in his hand, letting any and everybody see that it is to "Fröken Mariane Holmengraa, Of this place"; did he mean to impress the troupe? But the troupe did not seem to know the name of Holmengraa any better than the name Lassen—they said a little more about the piano, and Theodore promised to get one for the next time they came, and then the company left.

"Take this letter!" said Theodore to his little shop-boy. But there was no longer anyone to impress, and he said to Baardsen almost apologetically: "You think it strange, perhaps, that I am writing to Fröken Holmengraa, but it isn't a letter at all; I'm only sending her a ticket for the theatre."

"You're sending her a ticket for the theatre?" asked Baardsen, smiling.

"Yes. In other towns, too, a gentleman can send a lady a ticket for the theatre, I believe."

Now, whether Baardsen wished to respect the lad's honest simplicity or not, he smiled contemptuously no longer, but told him to give up his plan. "If Herr Holmengraa and his daughter cared to see the play, they would send down a servant to buy tickets quick enough. Don't you think they can afford it?"

"It is a red ticket, of course; for the best place," said Theodore. "I thought I might do it."

"Don't do it!" said Baardsen. "But if you really wish to

do something of the sort, then go with some tickets yourself, and stand in the hall and say what you have come for. Tell Fröken Mariane that it is important for you that Herr Holmengraa should show himself at the opening of your theatre and that you will feel grateful if they will make use of the tickets."

"How many tickets should I take?" asked Theodore.

"I don't know how many there are up there. Take half a dozen."

"I won't!" said Theodore.

At which Baardsen smiled and said:

"All right! You're a bud—a rosebud!"

After the rehearsal next day the actors were quite free until evening and they went out and about and showed themselves in the light of day and excited people's curiosity to see the play. They heard people speak of Willatz Holmsen over at the Manor, the man with pillars to his house, the gentleman with an unknown name. The pianiste pricked up her ears: Holmsen? The composer? Great heavens, the musician Holmsen? Just think, if she should get a chance to see him!

"Just think, if I should, too!" said the actor Max, who could make apt and sarcastic remarks, but at the same time was envious of everyone.

"You are an ape, Max!" said Fröken Clara. "Willatz Holmsen has written a great deal, a cantata, songs, dance-music, he's a great musician," said she, bragging a great deal about him just because she knew his name.

But Fröken Clara could not talk with apes about music; of course not—she said so plainly and went down to the telegraph office—to Baardsen.

So full of chance is life!

There sat Baardsen, burly and kind. He rose and offered the lady a wooden chair. "We have a sofa too," he said, "but it's buried in papers. But we will have it cleared the next time you come."

They spoke of Willatz Holmsen—yes, it was he who

lived here, right enough; he had come home to work, and was no doubt very busy.

"Ah, if he would only come to-night!"

"Have you a part, Fröken?"

"Gracious, it's I who am the Serpent!"

"I thought you were the angel."

"No. We have a leading lady for that."

"But you have the eyes—eyes bright as celestial gems."

"Do you think so?" said Fröken Clara, pleased.

Not so very much more passed between them this first time, and little Gottfred, of course, took no part, keeping himself in the background. But Fröken Clara soon noticed the high-flown language the telegraphist made use of, and she told him so and admired it: "You use such fine language, Herr Baardsen—'Eyes bright as celestial gems'—one does not hear such things said among us. Your being so big and splendid yourself may have something to do with it, perhaps—I don't know."

Strange!—the good Baardsen, who was killing himself by degrees, who drank and philosophized and contemplated existence with such a superior air—he was not superior now; no, there he sat listening and evidently a little touched by Fröken Clara's praises. It ended by his talking to her of music of his own accord, and he seized his 'cello and played. Never before had Baardsen behaved in such a foolish manner, and little Gottfred was surprised at him. And what sort of music was this? Little Gottfred saw Baardsen's eyes go deeper and deeper in his head, while Fröken Clara's grew bigger and bigger and she sat open-mouthed.

"Chest notes," said Baardsen, as he stopped playing. "This old 'cello is like a human being."

"But this is truly marvellous!" said Fröken Clara in a low voice. "I am lost in wonder at you!" And she said other things of the same kind before she went; it was clear she had been moved, for she spoke quite sincerely.

When the lady had gone, Gottfred said in dismay:

"I believe you are in love with her!"

Baardsen excused himself by saying:

"I meet ladies so seldom. Besides, she was musical, the creature."

"So 'The Serpent in Its Lair' appeared on the boards that bright summer evening. It was a great event; the paper gave it a good puff, people came running from town and country-side, and Nils the shoemaker sold all his tickets—indeed, he got back fifty from Kornelius, who was door-keeper, and sold them over again. The lawyer and his wife were there; District-doctor Muus was there, and a couple from the parsonage; from the Holmengraas' one saw Fru Irgens and the servants, and a little later Fröken Mariane and Willatz Holmsen actually came in—no one stayed away. But the unlimited sale of tickets ended in the house being overfilled, and District-doctor Muus fumed about the ventilation. "The first requisite in a theatre is air!" he said aloud to Theodore of Bua. But the play went so unexpectedly well—it was clear the worst thing about it was the title; the play itself was lively and exciting—people forgot they were sitting in a stuffy and unpleasant atmosphere. Of course, District-doctor Muus did not clap, and Lawyer Rasch did not clap, but all the same the applause was loud; it often began by a few claps from Fröken Mariane and her escort, and was carried on by Theodore, the owner of the theatre, the child of fortune. District-doctor Muus actually grew a little vexed at the applause at last, and turned round towards the hall and said "Hush!" Altogether it was a great evening.

But what was the greatest thing about it—the play, or the leading lady, or the actor Max? The leading lady! When District-doctor Muus went so far as to nod appreciatively at her acting and whisper a few words, the solicitor had, of course, to follow his lead at once, and say aloud: "This is one of the finest pieces of acting that I have seen." But, on the whole, it is probable the gentlemen liked Fröken Sibyl best, and this was not to be wondered at, for she looked ravishing. Had Telegraph-master Baardsen been present,

though, he would have received a singular impression of the Serpent, of Fröken Clara: now and again she showed depths of innocent depravity—no one could make her out; she could say such dreadfully coarse things in such an innocent way. She twisted things inside out and found hidden meanings for them. Certainly she had a genius for irresponsibility—it was second nature to her. But Baardsen was not there and did not see her; he was on special duty, it was said.

Next day again the troupe was free until evening, when the north-going mail-boat came—the artists were northward bound, far northward, to where all things end. This day Baardsen took the opportunity of calling upon Fröken Clara at Larsen's Hotel. He was invited to come into her room, though the visit was a little unexpected, and asked to take a chair, though the lady was alone and in bed.

What now? And where were the others? Was this another stroke of fate? It was eleven o'clock and everyone was out. To take the edge off this somewhat unusual situation, Baardsen wished to show himself an old hand—to show that a little unconventionality meant nothing to him; he spoke with an air of easy comradery:

"If you had been up and had had a few clothes on, we would have gone to Willatz Holmsen."

"What do you say!" she answered, raising herself.

"I have got leave from him. That's to say, he invites you respectfully."

"Were you at the play?" she asked.

"No."

"I wanted to ask you what you thought of it."

"It was a splendid success, I hear."

"Not for me."

"For all of you."

"No. I shan't go to Willatz Holmsen," she said suddenly.

"He has a grand piano; you and he can play," said Baardsen. "If you care about it, I can take my 'cello with me. But Holmsen plays everything."

"That's just it!" said Fröken Clara. "He plays everything, plays beautifully! When I heard you, I was quite overcome. I knew it before, and I know it still better now: I can't play. No, I am not going to Willatz Holmsen."

Silence. Has she been drinking? Baardsen may have thought. Anyhow, there she lies, young and wild! he may have thought. It had no connexion with what had gone before, but he remarked:

"It is no effort to me to think you perfect!"

"You have no reason to," she replied. "You weren't at the play. I won't play the piano again, but I shall play something else. My God! some day I'll show you—show everyone——"

"So you think that's your rôle in life?"

"Yes!" And she raised herself suddenly till she knelt on the bed. "For you don't believe for a moment, surely, that I can't play Fru Lydia off the stage?"

"No."

"No, of course you don't. People think her wonderful because she can turn pale—there's nothing in turning pale—I'll undertake to turn grey. Yes, it's there my rôle lies; I'll play them all to little bits. I could get married easily, but what's the good of that? He's rich and young; he wants me; but I should be mad to do such a thing! I will show all the world what I can do first. But first of all I have to go into the wilds of Norway and play the piano," she added sadly.

Baardsen did not know what to make of it all; but no, she was not drunk—that was plain to an expert like him.

"So then, you haven't found your right niche yet, Fröken?" he said, half in jest.

"No. That's to say, yes. But my time has not come yet. Yes, I have found my right niche; but you, on the other hand, certainly have not! You play the 'cello like a god."

And again the girl's praise touched the telegraphist and made him happy.

"I have a very fine instrument," he said. "So you won't pay Willatz Holmsen a visit?"

"No, I'll give it up. I shall play comedy only."

"Hm. If only you don't play tricks with yourself."

"No. But listen," said she. "Aren't you playing tricks with yourself? Are you content to sit here and telegraph and play the 'cello?"

Now, now, Fröken!"

"Forgive me! don't take what I say in bad part! It is interesting to talk to you, Herr Baardsen; but you must be boring yourself to death here. You smile, but you are boring yourself to death all the same."

"Ha, ha! You think I'm buried? You think I'm a victim of circumstances? No, Fröken; there you are foolish. I have no higher ambition, for other things are not higher —I act according to *my own free will;* it is that is the highest. I am not easily pleased, but, for the time being, I have all I need; I have house, clothing, meat and drink."

"Did you say 'drink' intentionally?"

"Hm. Not unintentionally."

"Ha, ha! Yes, but that's just it. Yes, I must laugh at you; but the day may come, perhaps, when you will have neither house nor clothes nor meat and drink?"

"I will accept that day like other days. Let Goethe take me the day I repine!"

"That was nobly said!" remarked the little lady, smiling.

Baardsen got up and said firmly:

"For the last time, Fröken, are you going to see Willatz Holmsen, and will you allow me to go with you?"

"I shall not go to see him. If you'll turn away a little, I'll get up."

"I will go."

"Now you are angry with me."

Baardsen did not fail to answer in lofty style: "The day I am angry with you, I shall drown myself in the sea!" And as he said it, he looked as if that was the utmost he could do for her.

Fröken Clara lay down again and said:

"I shall not get up."

"You do beauty a wrong when you cover it with bedclothes," said Baardsen.

"You don't know in the least how beautiful I am," said she. "But, to talk seriously: do you think I should be doing wrong to give up an art in which I am a nobody, and to turn to another in which I may do something great? Perhaps you don't care to answer?"

"See here, Fröken, it ill becomes me to act the part of mentor and advise folks what is best. But here it is a question of forsaking art altogether——"

"Yes, and taking up another."

"No."

"Oh, that is what you mean!"

"Of forsaking art. And that is what only one who cannot serve art must do."

"Is dramatic art not art, then?"

"No; artists."

"You won't get anyone to agree with you there."

"No," said he.

Footsteps sounded in the next room; the company had come home: "His hairy paw and a flush of brandy on his jaw"—laughter—"Good day, Pastor L. Lassen"——

"You haven't seen me play comedy," said Fröken Clara.

"No," said Baardsen again.

Suddenly Fröken Clara laughed and said:

"That's all a lot of nonsense you've been talking, of course. Do you wish me to take it seriously?"

"I have no objection," he replied.

And Fröken Clara laughed again and said:

"This conversation is becoming nothing but smart repartee, just like a play. Herr Baardsen, shall I see you again? Shall I meet you this afternoon?"

He met her in her room during the afternoon; she was alone and quite unembarrassed, half-dressed, freshly washed and very pretty. And something must have befallen them,

something Baardsen had not looked for when he came and had not taken in when he left; he had been dazed and lifted off his hinges, had become a happy boy and a fool—what a state of things! He seemed illuminated by some inward light, and he carried his head high, carried it as if it were made of air, radiant air. What a state of things!

When evening came he went up to the little churchyard and took a couple of roses from the graves of Lieutenant Willatz Holmsen and his wife. These flowers in pots had just been put there by Fru Rasch to please Young Willatz, and now Baardsen took them—he was so dazed. And he carried the flowers down to the quay and stood there and waited till the troupe went on board to continue their journey. "May I offer you these flowers?" he said to Fröken Clara, lifting his hat. "Where in the name of goodness did you get these beautiful roses?" she asked. "I got them in the churchyard," he answered. She understood, no doubt, that he was speaking the truth, for she repeated it to the others. Ah! that just suited the troupe—the artists—they laughed heartily in appreciation. "Is there time to go ashore again?" asked the actor Max, seeming troubled about something. "No," said the captain.

"The devil!" said Max. "I have forgotten a portrait of Lassen," said he.—"Let us arrange matters so that we can come back to Segelfoss again!" said the manager and the leading lady.

On the ship a couple of passengers stood looking hard at Baardsen, and one of them seemed to know him. "What's that man's name?" he asked someone on shore. "Oh, Baardsen is it?" and he turned to his fellow-traveller and said: "We had a Baardsen down our way, a ship-chandler, a big house. He had a son who would not take to anything. The lad had a try at acting, but—— And he wrote plays—they were a dead failure. Could that have been him?"

But Baardsen stood on the quay, hearing nothing and so dazed that he had to speak simply and could not find anything high-flown to say. "Welcome back when you come

south again!" he said, time after time. The last he saw of Fröken Clara, she was standing on the deck of the sooty steamer, drawing on white gloves which she had just bought at the store. And he wondered where she could have put down the flowers in the meanwhile.

These roses which the good-hearted Fru Rasch had allowed him to steal from a grave she had decked with them.

IX

DISTRICT-DOCTOR MUUS stayed a few days at Segelfoss and took the opportunity to pay Herr Holmengraa a visit. He took Lawyer Rasch with him.

"It is very good of you, gentlemen!" said Herr Holmengraa.

"I make a point of looking in on you when I'm in these parts," said District-doctor Muus. "And your daughter, Fröken Holmengraa, is well? And, by the by," he said at last, pointing to Herr Holmengraa's ring, "allow me to congratulate you on that!"

Ah! District-doctor Muus was so much at home in society, speech flowed readily from his tongue—he could patronize people and be affable. Lawyer Rasch was somewhat slower in his movements, but strong and downright—a man. He admired the district-doctor greatly and they were friends. The worst thing about the solicitor was that he was getting so fat, so overfed; he had a habit of jingling a lot of keys in his pocket and now and again he would bring them out and hold them in his hand—but the fingers that jingled the keys were a sight to see, they were so short and thick. He had changed his wedding-ring over on to his little finger, but it was too tight even for that now, and he had not worn a ring at all for some years, and did not seem to miss it.

He began at once to speak of the event of the day, of the theatre: "Were you not there, Herr Holmengraa? You made a mistake not to go. It was really worth the money for once. Ask the doctor!"—You see, the solicitor now took a special interest in the play because he had something to do with it, he was to write the criticism in the *Segelfoss News*—indeed, he had already done so.

"Hm!" said Doctor Muus. "Have you heard, Herr Holmengraa, of the change I am thinking of making in regard to my humble self?"

"No."

"Well, it isn't what you think, though the thought was natural enough—it isn't marriage."

"What is it, then?"

"I'm applying for a transfer."

"Really? I had rather it had been the other!" said Herr Holmengraa politely.

"Oh, as to that—you may get another doctor in my place who is much better than I am!"

"We have grown accustomed to you now. So you have applied for a move?"

"I have thought over it for long; this is not the place for me, to tell the truth. And then when the pastor's wife came—a cultivated lady and an Eastlander through and through—she decided me. After a few talks with her, my plans were made."

"Well, I shall probably come south after you one fine day," said the solicitor, stretching his legs.

"You too, solicitor? Now don't make an absolutely clean sweep of our Nordland!"

"Both Lawyer Rasch and myself may be said to have stayed out our full time here," said Doctor Muus. "You can't blame us on that score!" And he enlarged on this topic with much eloquence.

But as the mill-owner did not contradict them, they had to talk by themselves. Nothing else was to be expected.

The gentlemen were taking too much for granted, perhaps, when they thought to flatter Herr Holmengraa with their confidence. However, he rang the bell and offered his guests a glass of wine.

"If only I dare!" said the solicitor.

"Have you a screw loose inside?" asked the doctor.

"Loose? Not at all; just the contrary—too tight."

"Then you'll be all the better for a glass of Herr Holmengraa's good vintage."

"Oh, well, on the recommendation of a specialist.—What a pity, Herr Holmengraa, you weren't at the first-night! I won't say that it was a model performance in every detail—I won't say that. But there were some thrilling moments."

"Yes, the leading lady reached remarkable heights at times," agreed the doctor.

"Didn't she? And Fröken Sibyl too. And she was so very dainty too. Can you understand, Doctor, how she could take up with little Theodore of Bua in the way she did?"

"Tastes differ, you know."

"Yes, but both to the theatre and home again. That was silly of her."

"Wise Cadi," said the doctor to him, "we have not all the same social conventions. Those which allow us here to feel at ease in each other's company, others may feel as a clog and a trammel. Probably Sibyl had found in—what is his name?—Theodore of Bua the society suited to her personal taste and social outlook. How can you help that, wise Cadi?"

"No, you are right," said Lawyer Rasch. "What surprised me was that a couple of the sheriff's people were at the play. The man can't afford it."

"If we were to go into that, there were several who could not afford it, probably; the manager of your warehouse, Herr Holmengraa, has an assistant—is *he* particularly well off? I know him—I attended him once—he is married to

a girl out of a fairy-tale called Daverdana. That pair sat in the best places."

"In the first row, beside us, no less!" said Lawyer Rasch, looking at the mill-owner.

"I am not one of the snobs," said the doctor; "my profession entails my mixing with people. But I draw a line, not as a right only, but as a duty."

"Of course," said Herr Holmengraa.

"Yes, indeed!" said the solicitor, encouraged by Holmengraa's assent. "I don't know what the editor of the *Segelfoss News* thinks of doing; but I should not be surprised if he dealt with this matter. Fru Landmarck from the parsonage and both her daughters had to sit in the second row. Think of it! Daverdana in the first—back-comb in her hair like any lady, and a red stone in the comb. Lady! What next?"

"The next is fan and lorgnette," said the doctor.

There was a knock at the door and Young Willatz came in. He seemed surprised to find visitors in the parlour, and asked pardon for disturbing them; he had just brought Fröken Mariane home.

"A rare visitor," said Herr Holmengraa, giving him his hand cordially. "A glass of wine? Not to-day either? No, by the way, never in the forenoon."

"Why not in the forenoon?" asked Doctor Muus.

"Herr Holmsen works in the forenoon."

"Oh, the work!" said Young Willatz. "But I don't want to have to fight against a dull and heavy head besides my other disabilities."

"You must be engaged on a very delicate piece of work," said the doctor.

Mariane came in at a different door; she too stopped, surprised, and gazed at the visitors—then she pushed the door to with her back.

"I have been taking the liberty of inquiring after Fröken Holmengraa's health," said Doctor Muus, giving her his hand, " and here you are as well and as charming as ever!"

—The doctor took up the conversation again, saying: "A delicate piece of work, no doubt. But one may say that my work, too, is of no common kind—I am faced at times with extremely delicate diagnoses; but a glass of wine has never done me any harm."

"That's because we are healthy people, you and I," said the solicitor. "You're in familiar haunts once more, Herr Holmsen."

Willatz nodded, turned to Mariane and said:

"Weren't we to play those few bars over?"

"Yes."

"Yes, it would be very good of you to show us how far you have got, Herr Willatz Holmsen," put in the doctor.

Mariane burst out laughing. She found it a little difficult to act the lady.

"Hush! don't jingle your keys so, Solicitor," said the doctor, listening to the music from the other room. "However —it seems they are only practising."

"They are trying over something Herr Holmsen has written, probably," said Herr Holmengraa.

"Frankly, then, Herr Willatz Holmsen might have chosen another opportunity for that! He forced Fröken Mariane to go in there. Well, it's nothing to me! What do you think—will the young man come to anything?"

"I have seen his name in the Christiania papers now and again," said the solicitor.

"Oh, well, there's not very much in that! But Lassen —the Pastor Lassen who comes from here—he is a remarkable man."

"Yes."

"A great man! Think of his working through all those examinations, beginning as a grown man at the very bottom of the ladder and studying all those languages, sciences and everything, and now standing at the top! That's what one may call genius!"

"They say he will be given a bishopric."

"To be sure. And I hope the government will have the

decency to appoint him to a southern bishopric at once. Lassen has been long enough up north here—the whole of his childhood and youth, right up to manhood. It astonishes me, Herr Holmengraa, that you, who do not need to, can bear to stay up here."

"Well, you see, I have my business here," replied Herr Holmengraa, evasively.

"Yes, but even so—— For my part, I would rather be in a town. The country is all very well, but when one has other interests, intellectual interests——! At the same time, I have no desire to live in just any little country town. And, really, if one belongs to Christiania, one is practically in the country in almost any other town."

"But you are not from Christiania exactly," said the solicitor.

Doctor Muus frowned.

"Not so very far from it. Like all us children of officials, I was born here in the Nordland, certainly, but then I went further and further south and at last we came to anchor in Oesterdale. We had Elverum and Hamar as our country towns, but Christiania was our capital, of course. And since then—and this applies to you too, Solicitor—were we not in Christiania all our student years? Was it not there we had our baptism, so to speak? To be sure, the groundwork was laid in our cultured homes, but our development in knowledge of life, of politics, the drama, art, science—is altogether owing to the great Christiania. We belong to her."

"Very true! we belong to her."

Fru Irgens announced that dinner was ready. Mariane and Willatz came in. The doctor said:

"Well, that wasn't any very high-class music you treated us to, but thanks none the less. May I have the honour?" he said, offering his arm. "Or do you mind, Fröken?"

"No. Why?"

"Your smile seemed to die away."

"I was merely repressing the delight I felt."

"Well, well, you will soon be rid of me entirely, Fröken Mariane," he said as he led her into the dining-room.

"The doctor is applying for a change of post, Mariane," explained her father.

"You don't mean it, Doctor?"

"In dead earnest."

After that Mariane fell silent and the doctor respected this silence and did not disturb her. He turned to Willatz and said one thing and another about music, about singing—opera. "When shall we have permanent opera in this country, Herr Willatz Holmsen?"

"When the country is great enough," answered Willatz. He noticed that when the doctor pronounced his name, he laid needless stress upon it, but he could not make up his mind whether this was intended to be insulting or not.

"If you were poor enough, I would give you an order for an opera for the opening ceremony," said Lawyer Rasch, by way of a little jest.

Willatz replied:

"If you were rich enough."

"Oh, indeed! then it's a question of big money," said the lawyer, smiling indulgently.

"It is seldom that I meet with dinners so delicious as yours are, Herr Holmengraa," said the doctor.

"I quite agree," chimed in the lawyer, who was a great gourmet.

"Fru Irgens' salads are particularly good—yes, Fru Irgens, your husband can't have died young from partaking of this salad!"

Fru Irgens smiled her thanks: "Do you think so, Doctor? I'm glad of that!" She knew the company, and had taken pains with the meal; in fact, in making the chestnut compote, she had hit upon a discovery—by mistake, it is true—through using vanilla for lemon. But the compote had a new and distinctive flavour.

And now that in a way Fru Irgens had been given an opening to join in the conversation, she could not forbear drawing

Herr Holmengraa's attention to a new prank on the part of one of his people.

"How long are you going to put up with it? For this is going too far," said she.

"What is the matter now, Fru Irgens?" asked Mariane.

"Yes, indeed, I will tell you about it! but I did not like to mention it before. It was some nights ago when Theodore of Bua had the ball at the boat-shed. Well, a couple came up here—it was Florina who is in service at the solicitor's, and Nils of Vælta; they came and wanted someone to go with them to the ball—Florina had a yellow cloak on. Our Marcilie was very anxious to go, but she hadn't a gentleman—that's to say, she had Konrad, but he hadn't any boots. And what does Konrad do but go upstairs and take a pair of the master's boots?"

"What did he do?" asked Mariane.

"Went upstairs—here in this house—the new patent-leather boots Herr Holmengraa brought from town with him last time!"

Silence. The doctor asked:

"Who is Konrad?"

"One of the day-labourers. Aye, and the girl Marcilie went to the ball with him. They danced till morning. When they came home Konrad was drunk; he threw the boots back into their place just as they were, and there they are. And a pretty sight too! Shall I fetch them?"

"No," said Herr Holmengraa.

"When I look at them now and think of how new and shiny they were before, I would like to—and if you think such things can be allowed to go on, then——"

The solicitor advised cutitng the day-labourer's wages until the boots were paid for. That was plainly the thing to do.

"Yes, isn't it!" said Mariane very artfully. "What do you think, Willatz?"

"No doubt," said Willatz. "But the question is whether Herr Holmengraa wishes to deal in boots."

All looked at Herr Holmengraa, who was sitting smiling.

"I think we'll make him a present of the boots, Fru Irgens," he said.

"Oh, yes!" said Fru Irgens, nodding her head and looking hurt. "And the next thing will be that he'll take the clothes off the hooks. But that's always the way—it isn't the first time."

"It's nothing to worry about, Fru Irgens," said Herr Holmengraa indifferently.

But it is likely that in sitting there calmly, playing the host and drinking with his guests, Herr Holmengraa showed his great power of self-command. For as soon as Fru Irgens had spoken of the boots, he had drawn his lips together a little, as if he felt a twinge of pain; it hurt him, perhaps, to think that not even these fine boots, these freemason boots, and the silk-lined clothes, were respected any more.

The solicitor thought something ought to be done about the day-labourer. "I must agree with Fru Irgens," said he. "The people will get beyond us altogether if we don't take care."

Now the mill-owner knew very well, of course, that the *Segelfoss News* had been venomous towards him time and again, and that the solicitor had allowed it. But he made no sign: "One more little glass, Solicitor? Don't let a trifle embitter our lives!" And, touching glasses with her father, Mariane made the following speech: "Papa, speaking for your children, I must say that you are the best-tempered man in the world!"

They spoke of the growing misuse of flags in Segelfoss. and again the lawyer led the conversation: "Flags are run up every single day here now—God knows what for. To-day there's one more flag up, on the house of the new photographer who has just arrived. How many of us have flags now?" The lawyer told them off on his misshapen fingers: ". . . eight, nine—the place is ablaze with flags. Now it's all very well for us who, so to speak, are born with flags and grow up with flags, to flag for a birthday or some family

event; but think of Theodore of Bua hoisting a flag on Per of Bua's birthday!"

Perhaps wine makes men more honest and straightforward—however it came about, Doctor Muus said:

"You took me to task a short time ago for saying I belonged to Christiania. Now may I ask you, Solicitor, don't you own a newspaper and can't you write against abuses? What is the paper doing?"

The lawyer sat silent for a moment and Doctor Muus looked round at everyone as if to gather in the reward of his faithful dealing. It was a great moment—almost—this reprimand to his good friend.

"I own most of the *Segelfoss News,*" said the lawyer, "but I don't edit it."

"It struck me, when you spoke of the misuse of the flags, that you were right," said the doctor, soothing his friend again in a delicate way. "When I got a flag for my house, I was the only one; now everyone has a flag; the parish clerk, the smith, Jacob the vestryman, Olea of Grönvold—they all flag night and day. I have given it up."

"I take this opportunity of informing you that I do not edit the *Segelfoss News,*" declared Lawyer Rasch, with more solemnity than was called for. He looked honest—he took on an air of candour, an unnaturally truthful air. "I gave this pale-faced printer a start with the paper—I had an idea of my own about it, a plan for the future, but that has nothing to do with anyone. Well, then, I have given this man a start; he is on his own and edits his paper while he sets it up. In a very few instances I have written a paragraph for him or given him advice; that is all. I am often displeased myself at what appears in the paper, but I cannot interfere on every occasion; I have not even time to do so."

"Of course not!" said Herr Holmengraa. And, perhaps, after this concession, he hoped the lawyer would change the tone of the paper in future. Hadn't the mill-owner himself set up this Lawyer Rasch in Segelfoss and cleared the way for him, and presented him to the great folk at the

Manor—and is he so dead to all shame that he would let his paper stir up the workmen against their master?

"Nor had I any intention of attacking you, my dear fellow," added the doctor. *"Skaal!"*

"Skaal! I have to thank you for enabling me to correct a misunderstanding," answered the lawyer stiffly. "I am and shall remain unconnected with the editorship of the *Segelfoss News."*

The conversation turned to general subjects—town news, parish news; Pastor Landmarck had just finished a one-horse pony-cart which he himself had made from beginning to end. "Why, that's all very fine," said Doctor Muus, "but an official, a priest—where is it going to end! I can't imagine my father and grandfather standing planing with their own hands!"—Of the war in the East, of the fall of Port Arthur, not a word was said.

Perhaps wine helps to open the mouths of affectedly silent people—indeed it does so. Young Willatz suddenly bethought him to greet the mill-owner from Anton Coldevin—he is coming—he was already on his way; his father, the Consul, had been ill, otherwise he would have come before.

"I remember Consul Coldevin very well," said Herr Holmengraa. "He was middleman when I bought the land from your father; we did the business one summer night in the sunshine. The Consul was very pleasant and full of fun."

The lawyer was himself again. "It was a pity I hadn't come at that time," said he, "as in that case I suppose I should have been middleman."

"No doubt!"

"Well, well, Herr Holmengraa, it was through you I obtained my position and my field of action. That reminds me: have you seen my plantation lately? It is extraordinarily fine; isn't it, Doctor?"

"Grand. As I said, all that's wanting is nightingales. When are you going to have your garden fête, Solicitor?"

"Soon. Immediately after midsummer. The trees will

have grown much more—inches more—by then. And now I have the fountain, Herr Holmengraa, and I am in treaty with a foundry for a couple of works of art for the garden. Do you know what occurred to me? That is a good thing that a photographer has come. He will be able to photograph the fête and make a good thing out of it—everyone who takes part in it will want a picture, no doubt."

Fröken Mariane looked at him with narrow, roguish eyes, and said:

"But he'll have to photograph the boys and girls up for confirmation first, of course."

When dinner was over and coffee partaken of, the doctor got a chance to speak to Mariane alone. As to this change in regard to his humble self—his prospective departure—it was really his firm intention to leave Segelfoss—"What shall we say?—people meet and part! We met, Fröken Mariane, and now——"

"C sharp, B, E, Doctor—softly and very quietly; like this: C sharp, B, E."

The doctor stared at her through his thick glasses:

"What is that?"

"Romance."

"Ha! you are a child again!" he said, smiling. "Or has the Hydra crept from her box?"

"From her match-box. Doctor, don't tell you me that you haven't been very often at the parsonage lately."

"Oh, that's it!" He made excuses, denied the soft impeachment: what did she mean? The pastor's wife was an exceptional woman, with the same interests as himself, was cultivated. "But what are you thinking about?—The girls are only just confirmed, the youngest last year. Let us be a little reasonable."

"Oh, what has their confirmation got to do with it? They are both big and pretty."

"I don't deny that," said the doctor. "And, of course, I'm pretty popular with the family and have been there a few times. The two young ladies and their mother live

their own lives together; the pastor is not with them much, of course—he has his workshop. So you understand that a little cultivated society is not unwelcome there. But from that to something more is a big jump."

"You'll jump it all right, Doctor," said Mariane.

Whereat the doctor bowed, saying: "That sounds as though you advised me to do so? You have no interest yourself, then, in my not doing so?"

"C sharp, B, E——"

And then the doctor bowed again and left the child.

Herr Holmengraa went with his guests right down to the road, and took leave of them, intending to make a round by the works. "May I go with you?" said Willatz. Had Herr Holmengraa expected this offer, and perhaps led up to it? He was subtle and sharp enough to have done so. His liking for the young man, his pleasure over his home-coming, in his society, was quite natural; Young Willatz reminded him of the time when he himself came to Segelfoss like a king out of a fairy-tale, and went in and out of the Lieutenant's house and took up his abode there. Those were days! Times were changed now—the king was dethroned. Might not a Holmsen once more enter his life and help him?

The two men walked up the road slowly—it was the hour of the afternoon meal and warm; they met one or two of the mill-hands, who were wont to sneak away just at this time of the day for a little lie-off. Had the mill-owner reckoned on this, and did he wish to bring Willatz face to face with this bad practice?

But for the time being Young Willatz did not seem to notice. "An odd couple, those two!" he remarked of the lawyer and the doctor. "When they are talking, it comes home to me suddenly why the Chinese eat with sticks!"

What was he alluding to specially? Their narrowness of mind and view, their inanity? Without doubt, the solicitor was a climber, but it was Doctor Muus, the leader of the two, whom he disliked most, perhaps. Had the young man retained a little affectation from his school-days in England,

a little snobbishness? And had a little love of the heraldic, inherited from his ancestors, mixed itself with his views of life? He was thinking, maybe, that the doctor, who was by way of being well dressed, was wearing boots that had been resoled, and that his coat was marked by the back of his chair. And what sort of shirts were those the Doctor thought so fine! But all that would not have mattered so much if it had come easier to him to think small-beer of himself.

The pot and the kettle! Did Willatz Holmsen IV ever think at all of who he was himself? His associates had probably reminded him of it now and again, and told him about it. It is true that at times he would joke over his being the last of his line—he might admit being an old picture which had burst its frame. "But," said he, "a little finery, a little foppery, some inherited money, a landed estate—did all these together go to the make-up of a commonplace individual?" To be sure, he would acknowledge on fit occasions that he was only a full two hundred years old. And his family? They began as servants—rendering eye-service to their masters—they stood behind chairs; became major-domos, then stewards; got power and rose in the world; then acquired wealth. It was here the line began. Four generations of ever-increasing luxury and refinement follow—and now the race was dying out. It was the law of life. Tell us, what is there remarkable in that? Why should not earth's hiding-places be opened and others be let out—other cheats and parasites?

Yes, wine loosens tongues; Willatz talked—talked freely.

"They have no roots anywhere—all they want is to get to the south," he said, thinking still of the lawyer and the doctor. "What sort of creatures are they? Types of officialdom? I am more and more convinced that my father was right—that the official type is one of the lowest types in a nation—an artificial product. The merchant, the business man—with him all is risk; he lives by taking chances, by staking his very existence; nothing is certain in his life; he

has to be on the look-out every moment for some lucky speculation. His life is given up to work, to speculation and adventure—he goes forth boldly to meet his fate, whether it be success or ruin. What adventures can officials have? Nothing but changes of place, old routine in new surroundings! Now, as to the aristocracy; their strength lay in having lands and houses—in having a greater or a lesser world in which to rule: they drove their horses out through their own gates, out over their own roads and fields—the cultivation of their land gave a livelihood to a number of people. They not only laid the foundations of a race, they planted it in the soil. When the aristocracy was put an end to, the officials arrogated to themselves the empty place. Why? Because with such useless hands as theirs, which they could turn to no manual labour, they could only sit in an office writing. It became genteel to do such servile work as writing the letters of the alphabet. Official folk can go on being officials, son after father, for ever so many generations—they take no risks—the most that can befall them is to fail in an examination. They have to carry on this unadventurous and profoundly commonplace career which they have inherited and by which they gain their petty livelihood. Where his forbears stepped off, there the descendant takes up the road—his past determines his future—the way is clear—he has nothing to do but follow it. Now men extraordinarily endowed—with them it is quite different: riches are not inherited for ever—they vanish in the third, the fourth generation; genius dies with the possessor—it may reappear again—or it may not. Great men exhaust the powers of a stock to the very dregs; were it possible, they ought to be forbidden to beget any but daughters. But officials—there's no risk with them—they can beget sons and mediocrity as much as they like."

Ah! how Young Willatz held forth—how the wine had loosened his tongue and made it wag!

He wound up by saying:

"Officials belong to no place—all they live for is to go

south. They never have a home of their own; they dwell in strangers' houses—on strange soil. Just imagine! Generation after generation, homeless—forsaken of God for ever! Their children are never at home where they were born and brought up—they are torn from their first—second—third root-hold because their parents must move southward, ever southward—their roots trail behind them as they go. I pity them—these children—with their roots trailing behind the load of household goods. Then, after many years of life, they come back once more, perhaps, to one of these places they have known in childhood. They come as tourists, and look upon the spot with dry eyes. They remember, maybe, some little happening by that stone, near that birch—yonder in that stream they sailed their chips. They look at it for a little—then they turn and go; they continue their tour. Look at these men: they have bent over a table so long that they are round-shouldered; they are helpless with their hands; they generally wear glasses—a sign that as learning poured into their brains, it sucked the sight from their eyes—they can not see. These are the country's aristocracy. There they go!"

Young Willatz had it all his own way here—no one gainsaid him. But when he was in company with his friends he was, no doubt, exposed to sharp and well-deserved retorts: Hallo! listen to the heir, the nobleman, talking—he knows his lesson; his father and his four forefathers taught him. My father was a judge; his father was not even lieutenant in active service—who, then, was the greater? And who is he, the son? A country squire! What is he fit for? Ask a fortune-teller! Without examinations to work for, there is nothing definite to aim at; one gets slack and falls back upon one's estate in the country—there's bound to be some old servant or other to look after one there. The heir's all right—the young nobleman; he has his maid—inherited too—with a lace cap and mild eyes. If he lies too long some morning, she comes to ask if he is sick; if he sits too long on a chair, she persuades him to rise lest

he should do himself an injury by over-sitting. Then he dies. The old servant lays flowers on his grave, and that is the end. And note, it is the best of the heirs and nobles who die—the resigned and disheartened ones. Herr Willatz Holmsen, it is the most worthless and most useless who are able to withstand death and go on living. . . .

But every man has his own problems to think of—Herr Holmengraa had his, no doubt. Perhaps, too, he recognized in the young man's talk something of the Lieutenant, his father, who in all he said and did gave expression to the same opinions. Herr Holmengraa could still hear the old Lieutenant's voice—his words were bitter and they rang true; in his son's mouth they sounded more ineffectual. Maybe there was something in the idea that great men ought not to beget sons.

Herr Holmengraa answered: "Yes—yes," nodded and walked on beside him, but he thought his own thoughts. Did not Young Willatz see these loafing workmen, see this indiscipline? His father, the Lieutenant, would have fixed his grey eye upon them and asked a short question.

They walked on awhile in silence.

"Are those your people we have met down here?" asked Willatz.

"Yes."

"They don't touch their caps to you?"

"Now and then," answered Herr Holmengraa. "Oh, yes, some do."

"But why don't they all do it? Are you not their master?"

"No doubt," said Herr Holmengraa, "the reason is that when nature produces masters, she does not always produce the right kind."

"Is that the explanation?" asked Willatz.

"Your father was the right kind. I often find myself thinking of him—of him and his horse. If he lifted a finger, his people obeyed——"

"I should think they did!"

"And yet he was a good-hearted man. He stood firm be-

cause so many were dependent upon him—he knew that if he wavered, a hundred would fall."

"Yes, that was it," said Willatz. "Here comes another; let us see whether he will touch his hat!"

Herr Holmengraa looked up as though he had only just become aware of the man, and said:

"I'm sure he won't. That's Konrad."

"What Konrad? The one who took your boots?"

Herr Holmengraa smiled sadly:

"Yes, that was one of his pranks."

"And you keep him in your service?"

"I keep him because his comrades would make common cause with him and strike."

"Let them strike!" said Willatz.

Konrad met them and sauntered by. As he passed, he pretended to be occupied with buttoning his wristband.

"He didn't salute," said Willatz. "Where are all those fellows of yours off to, may I ask?"

"I don't know. They're taking a stroll or having a rest—they've taken to doing that. Some are sitting in the wood here, I see."

Willatz looked at Herr Holmengraa—saw that the King of the fairy-tale had grown weak, that his mouth trembled a little, and the irises of his eyes had become light and watery. Yes, he had aged.

Willatz halted, saying:

"Well, call that man back! Ask him where he's going!"

Herr Holmengraa obeyed, calling out:

"Konrad—oh, come here a moment!"

Willatz was surprised that the mill-owner spoke as if asking a favour and went a couple of steps to meet his workman; did he think that would do any good? Konrad did not come any the quicker for that. Nor, when at length he had come slowly near enough, did he wait silently to hear what was wanted, but asked: "What is it?"

Herr Holmengraa asked:

"Where are you going?"

"Where am I going?" replied Konrad. "Nowhere in particular."

"Isn't this a work-hour?"

"The others were taking a spell, so I did too."

"Go back to your work," said Herr Holmengraa.

Perhaps Konrad thought the whole proceeding somewhat unusual, somewhat strange; there was some change about the master; he had spoken with authority—he did not say a couple of words only and turn away as if to hide himself. Besides, he was not alone—he had this landowner man with him—what did it mean?

"I don't mind going back, if the others go too," said Konrad, following them.

"What is that, Konrad?" the others shouted from the edge of the wood.

"We are to go to work," answered Konrad.

"Come along, boys, let us see about that!" said a voice from the wood.

Out stepped Aslak, a tall, broad-shouldered fellow with a pipe in his mouth. He wore a peaked cap and a green wind-jacket; on his feet were high boots with buckles well up the calves of his legs. Two other workmen followed him—in their shirt-sleeves, with straw hats upon their heads and smoking cigarettes.

The procession passed up the road. Konrad fell behind and joined his comrades, and a lively discussion ensued. "Let us see," said Aslak.

Herr Holmengraa walked on with bent head, thinking. With bent head? That was not the way a King should bear himself. He was carrying out a plan, perhaps, and wished to strike while the iron was hot. When they arrived at the mill, he asked Bertel of Sagvika:

"Do you not need these men, Bertel, since they are idling in the middle of the work-time?"

"We need them sure enough," answered Bertel.

Ole Johan, urged by his unbounded curiosity, came up: "Of course we need them!"

"But they're loafing about."

"That's what they do," said Bertel.

"Hm. Just so! That's what we do," said Aslak's voice.

Herr Holmengraa turned to his workmen and said:

"Well, we will give up doing so for the future."

"Shall we?" said Aslak. "Is it you alone who settles that?"

"Yes."

"Indeed! I was fool enough to think we had a say in the matter."

"No."

"Ha, ha! Well, you're a great man, you are."

"We're to have nothing to say any longer, boys!" said Konrad.

Murmurs. More and more of the workmen had stopped loafing about and come up—they guessed that something was afoot. Aslak smoked and spat; when his pipe went out, he did not spare matches but relit it with several at a time. He was big and strong, and most likely he felt sure of himself.

"Go to work, boys!" commanded their master. "Go to work, those of you who wish to work; the others are discharged!"

Short silence.

"Have we become slaves, comrades?" asked Aslak.

The mill-owner bade him be silent and said:

"You, Aslak, are discharged, at all events."

Such a speech from the mill-owner Aslak had probably never heard before; he forgot to smoke; the unexpected had befallen him. When he came to himself, he began to explain that this spell in the middle of the afternoon had been introduced a couple of years before and that they would not give it up; he ended by saying that if he went, others would go too.

"We will all go!" came the answer to this.

This support from his mates encouraged Aslak, emboldened him immensely; he felt sure of his ground and

grew ugly-tempered—he spoke rudely to his master—became familiar and called him Tobias. "We know where you come from," said he; "you're from a holm and your name is Tobias—you're not Pope of Rome. And just you say another word, and I'll go," said Aslak.

"Yes, go down to the wharf-manager and get your pay," said Herr Holmengraa, nodding his head.

But Aslak must have had a very telling argument in the background—a strong trump card; he laughed a little with rage and injured innocence. He caught sight of Young Willatz, who was standing a little on one side, unmoved by what was going on, and asked:

"Is is that fellow there who has made you cocky to-day, Tobias?"

"Now, you men, either go to work, or clear out!" cried the mill-owner in a loud voice. "You, Konrad, are discharged too!"

But once Aslak had begun to connect Young Willatz with the catastrophe, he was not going to leave him alone all at once. "Is he your son-in-law, perhaps?" he asked the mill-owner. "Bring him along so that we may shake hands with him!"— At last it seemed to dawn on him that Konrad, too, was dismissed, and with that his face fairly shone with the knowledge of the trump card he held; he said: "Well, that settles you and me, Konrad!"

The decision has been taken and the order given—Herr Holmengraa and his companion began to walk down the road again.

The mill-owner did not seem to have got any great pleasure out of his firm dealing with the men—he still walked with his head bowed. Strange! a King should carry his head high—the old sailor and adventurer should not have been satisfied by rights without a couple of revolver shots to finish up with. He looked up at Young Willatz with his pale blue eyes and said: "I have not had any happiness these many years!"

Was this the strict truth on the part of the great employer!

Aslak was calling after them:

"You don't like Konrad, I know—he took your boots to go to the dance—ha, ha! what a lark! But where do you go dancing at night, Tobias? Do you think we care a fig for you, you freemason? You go to the cottages and to the hay-barns—there are plenty who have seen you. Your dance is a coverlet dance!"

Aslak continued to pour out abuse. That was his trump card. The workmen about him laughed loudly, ha, ha! Herr Holmengraa seemed to want to walk faster and to get away; he smiled meekly and shook his head as though he would say: "Did you ever hear such slander!" Willatz turned pale and halted. "One moment!" he said, turning round. Now he is walking back, taking his gloves off quietly as he goes. "Here comes the son-in-law!" said Aslak. "Let us say 'good day' to the son-in-law!" said he. Willatz goes up to him—something flashes in the air, and there lies Aslak. What—did he hit him with a dumb-bell? Heavens, what a fist!—brutal—English—not a cry from the victim—he just doubles up and collapses.

And now the crowd scatter; some retire uphill backwards; Willatz follows. "Is it me you want, sir?" says the cringing Konrad. "But I'm going off straight away." When his comrades hear him, they remember what all the trouble is about: they have been told to go back to work at once or leave. And here comes the mill-owner back again—the master is coming—all might be as before, they had only to go to their places. It was not the mill-owner who had used his fists—it was not his way to do so. . . .

They began to nudge one another and whisper—to go off, two by two, to their work. And they faint-heartedly leave the miserable hound, Konrad, to himself—and Konrad leaves Aslak. They are a contemptible crew: they came up on cycles; they wear shoes with buckles, and all Theodore of Bua's latest finery; they have adopted all that is superficial and worthless in this upstart town, but their character is unchanged. Yes, they are contemptible in every way.

Herr Holmengraa looked more surprised than anything else, but he would have been a fool indeed if he had not been pleased. Herr Holmengraa a fool? Far from it. But he seemed very bewildered.

"Excuse my having made you a witness to this scene!" said Willatz to him.

Aslak moved and sat up; felt his head, rose, found his cap and went. After going a few steps, he turned and looked back at the two, then went on down the road. He overtook Konrad further down—they went to the wharf-manager and got their pay, no doubt.

"Well, that's that," says Herr Holmengraa absently. "What I mean is, for years now I have asked them to do things and they have defied me. Bertel, what's become of them? Have they gone to work?"

"It seems so."

"They obey the lash," said Willatz, with a frown.

Herr Holmengraa shook his head; the seaman in him chuckled, no doubt, but the man in him saw further: in three days, perhaps, they would have the whole story over again—Aslak was not dead, his spirit was not dead.

They walk down the road together and Willatz says:

"Yes, you must excuse me; I had nothing to do with the matter itself. But this man asked several times to make my acquaintance, and I went to him on my own account. He made my acquaintance."

"Yes, indeed," said Herr Holmengraa.

Was he weak or was he clever? Did he not dare support his supporter? Or did he not wish to? It is not well for a fairy-tale king to reveal himself too clearly—it is best for him to remain a myth. But the extraordinary thing was that Herr Holmengraa suddenly began to put on airs, to boast:

"These people think I am rich no longer, that's why they have lost their respect for me. I have cut down the business a bit—I have had some losses—I have put up the price of flour a couple of times—these all seem to them bad signs. Well," and as he spoke he seemed to grow young and en-

ergetic, "I can afford to go on losing here for a lifetime. But, of course, I can't tell them that. All the same, I can afford it."

A King again! Ah! this Holmengraa! it almost seemed as though he could suddenly rise resplendent from the myth, and then suddenly vanish again, leaving a golden trail behind him!

"There's war going on in the East," he said; "Japan is paying for freight its weight in gold."

Willtaz looked at him. Was this man walking beside him quite sober? Willatz asked, by way of being polite:

"Have you connexions with Japan, too?"

"I have long arms," answered Herr Holmengraa, smiling. "I did business with Cuba at one time, with Puerto Rico, the Philippines, the Antilles, Jamaica."

The fairy-tale! Yes, to be sure, Herr Holmengraa was a King. He added: "But I cannot go and tell all this to these people, and so they fancy they can ignore me. However, to change the subject: I have long had a plan which I wished to speak to you about. But I won't bother you with it to-day, after that scene up there."

"On the contrary. It will interest me——"

"The plan dates back to your father's time, but I hadn't the chance of thrashing it out with him before he left us. You own great stretches of mountain land, green mountain pasture—leagues of it. You might lease or sell it to me."

"There's no game up there," replied Willatz.

"No, no game. For which reason it has no value for you. I wish to graze sheep there—hardy mountain sheep."

Willatz nodded: "The old Coldevins kept a couple of hundred mountain sheep, too, I believe."

"I would have rather more. I would begin in a small way —with a thousand head—and then add to them. Well, I might begin with two thousand, perhaps, but in any case it would be in a small way: I saw very different cattle ranches in Mexico. But, as you say, the mountains are without game, there are no wolves or bears—the animals could pas-

ture there without shepherds. There is water for them on the mountains they could drink; the mountains go right down to the sea; the sheep could find seaweed; here and there among the mountains are smaller hills, and there they could find shelter. The country is suitable—it's the very place. Think it over at your leisure, and let me know what you decide."

"I'll think it over."

The gentlemen parted and Willatz turned off towards the great house. He had it in profile before him now—saw all its house-gables facing to the west, and the fields running down to the sea. His home—and once—in the great past—the whole of Segelfoss had been his home.

Book Two

I

"WE are of opinion," said the *Segelfoss News*, "that assault and battery is an absolutely improper mode of procedure which is the rarest exception in our locality. We learn that such an assault took place a few days ago and is laid at the door of a gentleman from whom one would not expect such rash conduct. The case has been taken into court. We repeat the golden saying, to which we and all law-abiding persons will subscribe, that there is law and justice in the land, and also that the plain letter of the law is the same for high and low, and no one can evade it."

Willatz was summoned before a kind of arbitration court —neither a conciliation board nor a police-court investigation: it was called an inquiry, but what really happened was that the old sheriff of Ura sat and was sweet-tempered and kindly to both parties and made peace between them. This was what he had done all his days, and it was the best way. Aslak had appeared, it is true, with both the day-labourer, Konrad, and other witnesses, so that things looked serious; but there was no need of witnesses; Herr Willatz Holmsen admitted his blow and asked what it cost. The sheriff looked over his glasses at Aslak, and Aslak thought it over and named a sum. "That's too little!" said Herr Willatz Holmsen, and the sheriff seemed all at once to hear his father's, the Lieutenant's, voice. So Young Willatz paid double the amount. It was a remarkable business; a purchase of heads to crack. "But," said Young Willatz when he had laid down the money, "the next time this man earns a thrashing, I'll hit harder!" "Yes," said the sheriff, not to make bad blood, but rather good; "yes, but in that case there will be

fresh damages." Willatz answered: "Of course I'll pay again."

The same number of the *Segelfoss News* was very full of matter; there was an article by Lawyer Rasch himself—a leader on the theatre. It showed both ingenuity and expert knowledge. "It is indeed," wrote the lawyer, "no small matter, especially for a travelling company, to cope successfully with a first-class performance of such an exacting play as 'The Serpent in Its Lair.'" He passed the performance and its surprises in review; "but," said he, "it was to the leading lady, Lydia, first and foremost, that the drama owed its uniformly good presentation. As an actress she is incomparable, and she performed her rôle in such a manner that the hall resounded with applause. In several scenes, and more particularly in the scene with the poisoned cup, she rose to a magnificent height of tragedy which recalled to one's mind similar scenes by the most renowned actresses. Of the remaining performances, the first that calls for mention is Fröken Sibyl Engel, who deserves all praise both in regard to her dazzling appearance and to her acting. The leader of the company himself played the general—a type of the old school. A trifle less swagger would have been equally effective, no doubt, but in certain passages he was excellent. The other gentlemen and ladies have not as yet played any rôles sufficiently important to test their capacities; but it is to be hoped that this is not the last time these remarkable artists will visit our town. The cultivated public will hail their return with great pleasure."

Then followed Lawyer Rasch's criticism of the theatre itself: "A theatre ought not to lie on the outskirts of a town; one finds such a thing nowhere else. Nor is it usual to convert a so-called boat-shed into a Temple of Thalia; the owner of the house, Herr Theodore Jensen, might with advantage have shown more sense of the fitting in this respect. As to the building itself, it may be observed that in the circumstances it answers the requirements fairly well, but some shortcomings must be rectified. An expert took exception

to the ventilation at the time; benches, it may be added, are good enough, but benches with backs are better." Then came a few general remarks: "Modern theatre-goers feel there is something lacking if they are not in possession of a program—indeed, many theatres abroad have boys selling programs at a penny, a charge at which the public does not grumble. The *Segelfoss News* is prepared to print programs at short notice for the next performance. But where was the music? It is surely underestimating the musical taste of Segelfoss not to provide any *entr'acte* music throughout the whole evening. Even admitting that there were people of culture present in the theatre who may have heard orchestras of as many as twenty instruments—after which one can easily understand that a piano alone, however well performed, is no attraction—still, after all, something is better than nothing, and for those of the public who—possibly on religious grounds—had attended principally for the sake of the music, the silent intervals were irksome. We learn that Herr Theodore Jensen is responsible for this also, and we would recommend him to provide a piano on the next occasion. The proprietor of the theatre has made a good beginning, but he has much further to go before the whole undertaking will answer our expectations. Herr Theodore Jensen is the only shopkeeper in the locality; this will be changed in time, no doubt; he ought himself to take the initiative and make good the defects of the theatre, so that it may be worthy of the place and not disappoint the companies who, in good faith, apply to him for accommodation." The final paragraph was addressed to the public, to Segelfoss and the neighbourhood: "There are some people who still call this home of art 'the boat-shed'—we must protest in the strongest terms against the public's giving a nickname to the town theatre. A diminishing attendance will be the result of such a proceeding. Cultivated men and women will, unquestionably, forgo all the enjoyments of the stage rather than be compelled to seek them in a boat-shed."

Such was Lawyer Rasch's article.

From first to last, an attack on Theodore of Bua, the man who had brought dramatic art to the town and given it house-room! And how did Theodore take it? He defended himself in his store—he justified himself, as was to be expected from such a quick-witted youth—he waited till the shop was full of people and answered there and then. To be sure, he was rather silent and a little less bumptious for a few days, but he made up for it again to the full: "What is Rasch himself? An overfed lawyer!" said he. What annoyed him most was that the article called him a shopkeeper. "There are smaller businesses than our firm whose members are called merchants," said Theodore of Bua.

And one might have thought he would be short of money now: he had not received what was due to him for his split-fish yet, and on the other hand he had paid for his spring goods—ten big cases full; yes, and he had built the theatre. But Theodore was not short of cash. One fine evening, when many customers were about, and Telegraph-superintendent Baardsen was still standing buying a few miserable pennyworths of tobacco, he came out of his office waving a bank-note in his hand. Theodore turned to Baardsen and said in a loud voice:

"Have you seen the new thousand-crown notes?"

"I have heard thousand-crowns notes spoken of, I have even heard them spoken of with respect. But I have not seen any."

"Here's one!" said Theodore.

It was not such a new note after all, but it had been well treated and might pass for an unused one. Ah! this double-dyed rogue of a Theodore! he had very likely got his mother to pass her flat-iron over the note to make it look new for this exhibition! For the like of Theodore was not to be found. And so thought all those who stood round and saw the thousand-crown note with their own eyes.

What was Theodore of Bua really striving and working for, then? what was his aim? He was not miserly like his father and he did not hide money in chinks in the wall. Of

course he wished to become a great man, a great business man. Had he not just got the agency of "Goshen" margarine for the whole country-side right up to Tromsö? It was as good as a general agency, and all the dealers throughout the Nordland would have to apply to Theodore of Bua for "Goshen" butter—from the land of Goshen, where there was good pasturage! Gorgeous advertisements came from the manufactory, and all these colours decorated the front of the store till it looked like some paradise on earth.

And do you suppose Theodore of Bua was happy?

There were evenings and nights when Theodore sought solitude and dreamt. The time when they were still unconfirmed and sleighed together had been the happiest time of his life, perhaps. Since then, it is true, he had worked his way up from nothing to something, but she had drifted away from him. He remembered the last time he was allowed to pull her sleigh home for her—she was a big girl then already. "Thanks, put the sleigh there!" she had said. A door had swung open and swung to again. That was the last time. Now years had gone by, and he could not draw her a picture, and he could not compose a song for her—he was helpless. After he had become a great merchant he had often thought of making her a present of some valuable article he had got for the shop; but he had been unlucky with an all-wool shawl once—he had received it back with an inquiry as to why it had been sent. But Theodore had had an answer ready—he was a trader, he wished to introduce these first-class shawls to Segelfoss and this object would be attained if she, rather than anyone else, were the first to use one. She had sent her thanks, but she was really not old enough nor married enough yet for a shawl! These negotiations were carried on with one of her maids as intermediary.

After this fiasco Theodore would have been an ass had he continued to send gifts. Theodore an ass? By no means. But, even to this day, he would lay aside some specially fine article in the shop and dream he had sent it to her in tissue-paper, and only after it had lain by quite a long time did his

assistants receive orders to sell it. Such was Theodore of Bua's sad and humble love.

At last he thought he had hit upon a delicate form of attention: when there was a theatre he would be able to send her a ticket now and then. Indeed, without this secondary object in view, it is possible he might not have gone to work and built the theatre. And if there wasn't something wrong with this plan too! A half-dozen tickets for the opening ceremony—well and good! But if that were to be the end of it all, it would help him very little; and yet, on the other hand, if it meant half a dozen tickets for every single performance that ever was given, that would not be a reasonable business proposition. . . . No, indeed, Theodore wasn't born yesterday! Besides, he thought, no doubt, wouldn't five of the six tickets be wasted on people he took no interest in? No, thank you!

Thus he dreamt and mourned, sitting at his window, looking over towards her home. The days were full of work, and the evenings of jealousy and sadness: Farewell, Fröken, farewell! I walk up and down here in my lonely chamber and watch while you sleep. I may be of little account compared to him, but I shall love you truly and faithfully till my last hour. Whatever fate may bring me through life, I am too miserable and unhappy to murmur and rebel. Proud maiden, do not tread upon a worm lying in the dust—that might easily lead to your own ruin, which is not my wish. But, as to him, let him not forget that pride goes before a fall! I shall work myself up higher and higher in my line of business, and perhaps one day I'll show him what kind of man it is he has made unhappy for ever. I'll be hanged if I don't!

And next day he would be quite himself again.

There he is, with rings on both his hands and clad in a grey summer suit—as fine a sight as one could wish to see. He actually goes so far as to put his boots out to be cleaned every day, and comes fresh and shining to the shop. His father, up above in his attic chamber, knows nothing of all

this progress; there are whole days when he does not see his son, and, if he thumps on the floor with his stick, his son comes only if he has time. That's what it has come to now. Old Per of Bua, to be sure, was a man without any feeling for the niceties of life; why should one wear light clothes in summer and dark in winter? One wears what one has! But Per of Bua, of course, did not reach as high as his son's knees. When Theodore greeted one, he took off his hat as people do in other towns, but he did not speak, he did not say "Good day"—that's not done anywhere. He had begun to write "E. & O. E." on his accounts; yes, he even wrote it on his letters. "What's the meaning of these letters?" asked Julius of the hotel, pushing as usual. "You wouldn't understand," answered Theodore, "but it's Latin and all big firms use it." "If only Lassen, my son Lassen, had been here, he would certainly have been able to explain it!" put in Lars Manuelsen.

Theodore got a copying-press and a copy-book; aye, and he got a fire-proof safe of the sort that falls into the ashes when the house burns down. In it he kept the firm's books. His father should just have known of it—known that his store had become a firm and that the firm wrote in books!

All the same, though, old Per of Bua must have got wind of the fact that progress was leading the store and his son a wild dance; of course he knew about Theodore's cargo of split-fish, which for a long time had been a yearly phenomenon; he had learnt lately that the boat-shed had become a huge dancing-booth; he guessed from various signs that gentility and luxury had crept into his house and his family—it was not the safe kind of trading one could keep one's eye on from day to day that was now being carried on.

He banged with his stick upon the floor.

His wife—Fru Per of Bua—came after some time. She had grown stout with years, and ruled placidly now over two servant-girls. That wasn't the way in the old days; then she did all the work alone and had many children to look after to boot. She had lost two small boys through scarlet fever,

and her two daughters were grown up and in service, the one with the merchant Henriksen of Utvær, and the other with Consul Coldevin in the Westland; of course, they were both housekeepers and very fine ladies indeed. Fru Per of Bua had now only Theodore at home, and in her regard he stood above them all. She waddled slowly and quietly about the house, and did not hurry herself any longer, even when her husband thumped upon the floor. That was what it had come to. She had but to keep herself beyond the reach of his stick, and then could ask what he was banging like that for—what in the world he was banging like that for.

Per of Bua was not confidentially inclined; he had passed his life without talking to his wife, and if he had to speak to her his eyes would grow somewhat hard.

"Theodore is to come up!"

"That depends on whether Theodore can spare the time," answers his wife. Ah! progress had made its mark on Fru Per of Bua too; she chose her language more carefully than before, and smartened herself up so that she might look a little attractive. But the hardness of Per of Bua's eyes was not softened by her fine language.

"I'll teach you to talk about sparing time!" he yelled, clutching his stick.

Now, he might throw the stick—it was by no means out of the question—he had this last resource. So Fru Per of Bua went out of the door.

And there the man lay. He had lain thus all these endless years, palsied on one side, "done for" and savage—sometimes in a frenzy, sometimes crushed. This summer he had grown still worse—his mind was more affected; his temper more uncontrolled. The old method of keeping oneself going with food was of no use any longer. What was the good of food? It merely helped to lengthen an existence which ought to end at once. But Per of Bua would have objected strongly to the idea that his existence was going to end. Was life a burden to him? Quite the opposite—remember that! As long as he could feel a spark

of life in himself, he wished to live—to live years and years —his wife, yes, and his son, would die of old age ere he went to his grave. Remember that! He was going to win, to triumph—it would be a splendid joke, when he passed his hundredth birthday and had to take over the store again because his son was breaking up.

And yet he had cause for tears.

And he shed them too! The wine-licence had been taken from the store now, without his being able to do anything. Who looked after the treacle-barrel in the cellar? Who cleaned the weights on the scale and saw that rust did not gather upon them and make them heavier than they need be? Oh! to lie here with a dead side and not be able to carry on his work! It would have been much handier if he could have taken off his dead side and buried it and been quit of it. As things were, it was nothing but an expense and a burden to him. Per of Bua could not see that his dead side was of any use whatever—he ought to have considered that he lay much more steadily in bed with than without it, and when he raised himself and sat up, it was indispensable.

Theodore does not come. Oh, he can't spare the time! We'll just see!

Per of Bua's good hand is strong—he seizes a chair and thumps deafeningly with it. The noise is heard plainly down in the store, it is heard far round about, and to put an end to it Theodore finds time to spare and goes up to his father. He does not slip his rings off any more, but comes forward in all his splendour—his father's eyes are not likely to soften at the sight of it.

"Oh, so you could spare the time to come up!"

Theodore says angrily:

"I don't know what you're knocking the house down for. What do you want?"

His father is silent awhile. He is bearded and bald, animal-like—he draws back his upper lip and shows his teeth—no, indeed, he is not a pleasing object:

"O—ho! what do I want? I lie here and thump on the

floor, you chicken, you lump of dirt! Did I disturb you? Let me see that finery of yours—the store pays for it! What do I want? I want a little word with the gentleman, with the pup—you are so very fine, I'll take and wipe my back with you. I have upset your mother too, I suppose? I knocked on the floor, and have given her the gripes. What are you standing there for? Sit down, can't you? Curse you!"

But Theodore did not sit down; his father was mad and he might throw his stick. Theodore went to the window; he was safest there—his father would not risk breaking the glass. Besides, Theodore was not so very frightened; he was by no means a cur—he wouldn't be taken alive!

His father spat again and said: "Curse you! Have you got the matches?" he asked.

Theodore had not thought any more of the childish plan about a thousand gross of matches, and he answered merely with a curt "No."

"I thought not," nodded his father; "no matches for the Old Gentleman! Have you got the salt?"

"No."

In that moment Per of Bua understood at last that he had been laid on the shelf for good—his son did not even make a show of obeying him. "What!" His good hand crashes down upon the bed-frame with terrible force; he shrieks; his hand is cut; at the same moment it withers; this good hand, too, withers and dies from the fingers up over the wrist, up over the forearm. He feels as heavy as lead on both sides. What—what is this? does this come from the bruised place on his hand, from this galling wound? It is a trifle, nothing! He stoops forward, and tries to bite savagely at the wound, but cannot reach it; he looks at it, licks his lips, and growls. He is like a madman, an animal—Per of Bua is helpless! So be it! but no one shall stand there and see his helplessness! He will hide it by wriggling violently—as though his position is uncomfortable but he is quite able to put it right himself. He succeeds in poking the

one dead hand with the other—they are soft and limp, they roll over like lumps of dough. A flood of anguish begins to rise within him, but he has the strength to thrust it back. He speaks—yes, he shouts as if to the elements, to the ocean and the thunder:

"I will divide my money. The girls shall have their share before you ruin us."

Oh, it was not the girls that he was thinking of most, but that was how he put it. "And I'll go on pension myself," he said, "and it shall all be put down in writing!"

Theodore did not reply.

"Do you hear?" shrieked the old man. "Call the lawyer!"

Theodore went out.

Nonsense! the lawyer was certainly not coming. Divide the property? What—divide up the store, parcel it out, tear down the building? Begging your pardon, we shall do just the contrary—buy ground, enlarge the store! No message will be sent to the lawyer, and a crippled father could not fetch him himself. That's how things were to be.

But if his father took to howling, the end would be that someone outside would hear him and bring the lawyer to the store. That was possible. Well, then Theodore would speak to Herr Holmengraa; he was the man who had been able to put a curb on his father's savagery before. And if nothing else helped, a howling father might have to look out for the asylum!

The days passed.

Theodore made use of life as a hunting-ground, as a pasturage; he worked right and left, and was happy in his labours. The theatre flourished as a dancing-hall; Saturday nights were regular dance-evenings, and the young folk enjoyed themselves to the full. The fish-drying on the rocks went well—in a couple of weeks' time the cargo could be loaded into the smack and sent off; it meant a lot of money, even after deduction of advances—money for finery, for extensions, and for the comforts of life. Theodore got

himself a big gramophone. To begin with, he kept it down in the theatre and played it there, and there was a world of melancholy in the Coronation March and in *Forget me not*. His enterprise was capable of higher flights—had a merry-go-round been genteel, he would have started a monster one, with streamers and a barrel-organ; there would have been money in it! But a merry-go-round smacked of fairs and vulgar revelry. No, but he was thinking of a cinematograph such as they had in other towns—that was respectable and there was even more money in that! Ah, what wasn't there to be made out of Segelfoss! When it was rumored that Lawyer Rasch was making preparations for a great garden fête, Theodore of Bua scoffed at the whole thing and the wish-wash one would get there. Now, *he* had a downery and there was a hut there; an excursion might be made thither with the gramophone and there could be a fine spread. If only he could get some of the bigwigs to come!

But one day Theodore went too far.

Playing the gramophone in the theatre had the drawback that people gathered outside and faces collected at the windows; and, after all, there was no rhyme or reason in sitting and enjoying the gramophone alone, considering his object had been to make a big show before the whole town with this new music. What if he took it home to the store! It would draw people and increase trade; he would have a chance of announcing that it had cost him a small fortune; he could explain the mechanism. People would be struck all of a heap.

He carried the machine home, took the horn off, wound it up, and began to play.

People were struck all of a heap. But there was trouble overhead at once—the stick thumped.

For Per of Bua had not killed his good hand after all; he had only been unlucky enough to knock the feeling out of it; it had come to life again and could bang just as hard as ever. And the gaping wound troubled him so little that he left it —if you please!—without a bandage. Of course the wound

opened afresh and bled a little every time he thumped for anything, but let it open if it liked!

What kind of a noise was that down in the shop? There was good reason for thumping, indeed! As the stick had no effect, the chair went to work. Still nothing but music. Then something happened: Per of Bua bellowed—a roar as from a mighty ox—a prodigious bellow to come from one single man!

But Per of Bua had been out of the shop for so many years now that no one remembered him and no one bothered about him. So when Theodore shook his head and stopped the instrument, people were disappointed and made remarks about some people not being able to stand music—yes, some dogs were even driven quite mad by it. "My father is not altogether right in his head any longer!" said Theodore mysteriously.

Theodore had learnt a little more now with respect to a certain possibility: his father *would* howl. Sooner or later this would call attention from without—it would lead to the solicitor coming—and then Theodore might look for both division of the property and all manner of evil. A division at this time would throw him back horribly—would ruin him. Even if his sisters left their shares in the business, he himself would lose prestige and sink to the level of manager of the store. Besides, his sisters would be sure to demand their money at once—they needed it; autumn and spring were always expensive times for the two ladies. It was then that half-worn dresses came home, dresses which their fat old mother could not wear out, but which she exhibited with pride and disposed of to the servant-girls round about.

Theodore speculated as to whether he could not silence his father by threats. Look here, Father!—he said to himself, rehearsing as he mounted the stairs to the old man—if you roar like that once more, I give you fair warning that I'll send you to the asylum! But that was not the way he talked when he stood in his father's room. While he was

yet on the landing, he was siezed with misgivings as to whether he could bend his father to his will by force; he had to do, not with a human being, but with a bundle of obstinacy—a bedridden fury in human form. But he would feel his way and try frowning at him.

"You shriek so that you're driving people out of the store," he said to his father.

The old man did not look altogether displeased. "Did I disturb them?" he asked.

"People are asking whether you want to go to the asylum."

A sudden spasm ran through Per of Bua; something in the nature of a fit—but of delight, of pure amusement. It did not escape Theodore's notice that his father's mouth puckered into a lightning smile, and he understood, too, that his hint about the asylum had been wasted.

His father went straight to business:

"Are you going to buy matches for the Old Gentleman?"

Well—maybe he could get peace in that way! The speculation was old-fashioned and idiotic, but Theodore must give and take. He answered: "Of course we can get the matches if you think it such a good bit of business."

"And the salt?"

"Yes," said Theodore.

After all, now when winter was drawing on, salt wasn't such a bad idea; so Theodore agreed at once to this. He could ship the salt to the Lofoten fishery or he could store it till spring and send it to the Finmark fishery.

But if he had thought to get anything out of his father by giving in to him, he was mistaken.

"Then have the lawyer fetched!" said the old man.

Ah! Per of Bua was so malicious and self-confident—he gazed at his son in triumph: he had roared! The great weapon had been found; a first-class bellow should lie within his breast all the time ready to burst forth, mother and son should be always waiting, listening for it—should be in constant fear of it.

"Hm!" said Theodore in order to gain time. "I will

be loading fish into the smack in a couple of weeks, then we'll bring home salt on the return trip. If it's good weather, we can load the matches on deck under tarpaulins."

"I won't have that music in the house," said his father.

"All right," said Theodore.

"The lawyer is to come here to-morrow."

An ultimatum! No, to come to terms with such obstinacy was impossible! While old Per of Bua lay on his bed and tittered, his son went down to the store weighed down by many a gloomy thought. But the matches and the salt should not be bought, at any rate. The devil was in it if they should!

A telegram was awaiting him—from Didriksen? Yes, from the commercial traveller Didriksen, of the firm of Didriksen & Hybrecht, who travelled in his own vessel. He is in trouble—damage to the machinery on the voyage; is lying at Utvær for several days, and must speak with Theodore at once—to-night if possible.

So that was it! Yes, but Theodore was in a bad humour and it was a long way; first by bicycle and then by boat. All the same he was, on the whole, cheered by this telegram: something good might come of the excursion. What could it be? He had not a notion! But, in any case, he would gain a couple of days' time, as the lawyer could not do anything without him. He sent Kornelius, his shop-assistant, up with the telegram to his father, telling him to explain that it was important.

After he had been cycling for an hour, he met Florina, the maid-servant at the lawyer's. She stood in the middle of the road as if to stop him. When he alighted, she asked:

"Do you want me for anything?"

"No," he replied, astonished.

Ah, that girl Florina had grown up with Segelfoss town and was a deep one! But she was a customer of Theodore's and bought a good deal of finery.

"No," said he again, "I don't want you. Where have you been?"

"I've only been out to Utvær for a jaunt."

"What's the road like?"

"The road's much as it is here," she answered. You're going to Utvær, aren't you?"

"Yes. How do you know that?"

"Oh, I understand it now," she replied, and then suddenly clapped her woollen shawl over her mouth, which had been uncovered until now.

Theodore got ready to ride on.

"I know, too, who you're going to at Utvær," said she.

All at once it dawns on the quick-witted fellow that Florina had got news of Didriksen's appearance at Utvær and had sought him out there. And then a little explanation followed: Yes, she was an unhappy girl with whom things had gone wrong, and she had gone to him now and told him so. For it wouldn't do for such things to go quite scot-free. She had only herself to depend upon, and if someone came and plucked her flower in the midst of her youth——

"You've got your bank-book," said Theodore.

——plucked her flower in the midst of her youth, he could understand himself what a misfortune that was for her. And now she would beg Theodore, like the kind and influential man he was, to put in a good word for her. "I'd rather have all I'm to get, at one time," she said, "and then I'll know where I am. For a travelling gentleman is like a bird of passage and no one knows where to find him. And, besides, he may die in the meantime, and be carried off."

"Well, well! but you've got your bank-book," said Theodore. "Now how about Nils of Vælta? Aren't you going to have him?"

"Nils? No, he's broken it off."

"He's a fool!" said Theodore.

"Well, whatever he is, I've got no one but myself. So if you'll think of my misery in this cold world and see justice done me,——"

"I'll put it right with him," said Theodore. "But I don't know what he wants me for. It's business, probably."

In his heart he was not displeased with this mission; it meant esteem and trust; a commission too, perhaps—yes, that was not inconceivable. He cycled on, hired a boat for Utvær and rowed on board the ship.

Herr Didriksen had visitors; the saloon was full of festivity and laughter—girls from the shore, a couple of gentlemen; Didriksen himself was somewhat merry. He had put the cook into dress-coat and white cotton gloves so that he might wait on the company in correct fashion.

"Haven't you got the telegraphist with you?" he shouted. "Welcome all the same! Here, have a glass or two! But the telegraphist? Haven't you heard anything of him? Chief, it was you who wrote out the telegram and forgot—what was his name again? Baardsen? The devil take you, Chief! The man interested me—is he still rotting away at Segelfoss? But welcome all the same, Herr Jensen; thanks for coming! We were only waiting for you; the Chief has got the machinery patched up again at last—we're starting quite early to-morrow morning."

When Theodore had had a glass or two, Herr Didriksen remembered he wished to speak to him, and took him up on deck. He spoke disjointedly:

"That visit of mine to Segelfoss was a costly joke. The girl was here to-day, with tears in her eyes, a bit of woollen stuff over her mouth. 'What's the matter?' I asked. So and so! 'Well, well!' said I; 'it can't be helped!' 'No, it can't,' said she, but I must not let her die in misery! 'No.' And I must not turn her adrift! 'No.' But mightn't she have a little money from me? 'Naturally!' Mightn't she have it all at one time, she said, as in that case the authorities needn't know about it? 'By Jove, you're a sensible creature,' I replied; 'there'll be nothing in writing then, and I'll be done with it. What shall we say?' 'Two thousand crowns,' said she."

Herr Didriksen watched the effect of these words on Theodore.

"Madness!" said Theodore.

"Madness—that's what the Chief says too—I've told him everything. But in any case I wished to speak to you first, and I'm most grateful to you for coming. The thing is this: I couldn't hand over a big sum to the girl straight away without having some kind of security, and I didn't wish to show myself at Segelfoss. That's why I had to telegraph to you, and once more thanks for coming."

"It was a pleasure."

"Thanks. But this matter is a little complicated: Madness, you say. Yes, indeed. But I can't let it be pushed to extremes; my fiancée might get to know of it."

"Are you engaged?"

"Certainly. I got engaged up north, to a daughter of Consul—what's his name? I mean that very rich man up in Finmark, the whale-lubber man; his only daughter—look here!" Herr Didriksen takes the portrait of a lady from his pocket and holds it out enraptured; it was signed: "Your Ruth." "Yes, there you see," said Herr Didriksen, "it's his daughter—I can never get hold of his name. But, you see, she might get to know of it—and that mustn't happen."

"She won't get to know of it," said Theodore.

"Well, you see, it's not quite impossible. The more so that the girl—the Segelfoss girl—the fact is, I liked her so much, because she was so sensible, that I showed her this portrait. Wasn't that horribly stupid?"

"I don't know."

"The Chief says it was stupid. But I drank a little with her to-day because she was so jolly and sensible, and then I showed her the picture. 'Ruth!' she said, and looked at it. 'Yes, Ruth!' said I; 'and now you understand why this splendid girl must not get to know anything about it,' said I. Yes, she understood that, and she wouldn't go to a magistrate or get an order or anything, she said. 'Let me have a talk with Herr Jensen first,' said I."

Theodore thought that half, that one thousand crowns, would be quite enough.

"Yes. But then it will get out, and they'll begin to nose

around about my means, and then they'll run me in for the highest amount all the same. Besides—I don't wish to behave badly and wriggle out of it. A thousand crowns for a whole fifteen years isn't as much as twopence a day for food and clothing."

Theodore cast a glance at his young friend; this light-minded son of a fine old business-house had good instincts which Theodore hardly understood; his inheritance of instincts was exclusively of the sort that, day in, day out, year in, year out, he had to try and get rid of, while reaching out after the good ones he found in others.

"True. You are right!" he ejaculated suddenly, as though it was his own idea. "And now I may as well tell you: I met the girl on the road and she begged me to speak to you for her."

"Indeed. But, you see, there are further complications. That evening we were together at Segelfoss—you remember—what was his name?—Baardsen, the telegraph-master—he spoke of a man who had come home after twelve weeks' absence, and whose sweetheart had been going about for three weeks already with a woollen muffler and the toothache. Do you remember?"

"Yes."

"I wonder whether it was this girl he meant. That struck me to-day."

"It might have been this girl he meant," replied Theodore, who wished to keep up the rôle of being just and unbiased. "But you can't very well mix yourself up in that affair, can you?"

"No, but looked at all around, it seems a pretty bad mess. That's why I wished to ask the telegraphist to come along with you. I'm rather glad that he didn't now, for if he had I would probably have asked him. But you must not think that the affair is all plain sailing yet!"

"Oh!"

"The Chief says there's nothing wrong with the girl."

"What?" asks Theodore, genuinely astonished.

"The Chief is no end of a knowing fellow; he had a talk with the girl after I saw her to-day—he gave her his watch-chain, by the by—and he says there's no more the matter with her than with me or him."

Silence. Theodore thought for a little and then remarked:

"But is she only shamming, then? She's lost her sweetheart by it anyhow."

"Yes," answered Herr Didriksen, laughing, "she told me that too. But it's a question whether she doesn't find the money worth more than the sweetheart. And besides—mayn't the sweetheart come back just because of the money?"

She has a bank-book, thinks Theodore; she is a limb of Satan! Then all at once he cries out with decision: "Don't you pay a farthing!" But, not being sure of himself and being new to all these high-minded ways of thinking which he is trying to copy, he adds: "I would have done exactly like you—paid handsomely and been done with it; but if it's a case of cheating and blood-sucking, that's another matter."

"But I can't go to law about it."

"No," agreed Theodore, "that you cannot!" And Theodore pondered again. But all at once he is struck by the comic side of it all. "But, deuce take it, you can't pay before the child is born! It will never be born, perhaps!" says he.

"Quite right," answers Herr Didriksen, "and it's for that reason I've put you to the trouble of coming here. The girl is fairly sly, I fancy—what's her name?"

"Florina."

"Florina. Fairly sly, artful. Now I'm going to deposit the money with you, Herr Jensen—I have promised her that; but she is not to get it before the time. I have talked it over with the Chief; he's a shrewd fellow. And when she gets it in the end, it is on an undertaking to keep silence—signed and witnessed—otherwise she might come to me again. Everything is to go down in black and white."

"Splendid!" said Theodore, and his eyes shone.

What made him so overjoyed all at once? Had a plan been germinating in his head and suddenly come to life?

"Very well!" he said to Herr Didriksen. "I'll hold the money, and I'll settle with Florina too, you may depend upon that."

"But I hardly like to give you so much trouble. You would have to explain everything to her at once and stop her mouth," said Herr Didriksen.

Theodore answered:

"I'll do so. I'll see to everything."

He stayed on board until the morning and slept while the others were carousing. It was plain young Didriksen had not learnt his lesson yet; he loved pleasure, he sought and found it. Young and handsome as a prince, he mixed with his guests and played the attentive host all through the night. At four in the morning a hot breakfast was served. "Let me offer you a little refreshment!" said the host, polite and lavish and attentive as always. The cook had on fresh white gloves; the engineer played the concertina between the courses—there was no end of novelty and amusement.

Then the company broke up; the guests went to their boats and rowed ashore. They were young and high-spirited and not in the least the worse for making a night of it—not a bit of it! From the shore they waved a jovial farewell.

Twenty years later they may remember this night and smile. Thirty years later they will probably be angry with other young folks for making a night of it.

"In the event of—of your not having to pay anything, what then?" asked Theodore, with his foot on the rope ladder.

"Well—after all she was sensible enough in her own way and was willing to help me to keep clear of the authorities," answered Herr Didriksen, with a little laugh. "We mustn't do her out of it altogether. However, she didn't behave particularly well either, so—give her half!"

When Theodore got home, he went up to his father and said—for he had such a deucedly fat pocket-book that he could say it:

"Has the lawyer been here?"

His father starts, though he has reason to think the question is not honestly meant.

"I had to go off yesterday," said Theodore. "There's nothing to stop the lawyer coming now if he hasn't been here already."

His father scowls at him sidelong, out of cunning eyes, and says: "You rip!"

Per of Bua suspected mischief—had he the upper hand no longer? Let us see! These long years of idleness had not improved him, but had hardened him a little every day—and now he had gone a long way on the backward path. A little longer, and he would become uncannily malignant and savage; his natural instincts were already having full and unfettered play—he was hastening back to his distant past, to the cave, to cunning, to bellowing and sudden onslaught. He was running straight ahead with eyes fixed on the unseen—the darkness was calling him.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Theodore. "I have other things to do than stand here. If you wish to divide the property, all right! I'll buy you all out!"

It was plucky of the lad Theodore to speak like this without a quaver. But his father was game too; he stuck his head on one side, as though he had to do with an utter nonentity, and talked to the dust on the floor:

"You'll buy us out, you chicken, will you? But it's you who are to get out, you chick."

Then he stole a glance up at his son.

"What?" asked Theodore, and it seemed as if something in his head closed up and prevented him from thinking clearly; he heard the rush of blood in his ears.

"I shall buy *you* out!" said his father, hoarse with fury. "Out of my doors!" he cried. "You ask how I'll do it? I'll turn you out of my house, out into the street, you good-for-nothing!"

But, in one quivering moment, Theodore was himself again. "So, that's what you mean!" he said with a wry smile. He had his business at his finger-ends: the yearly

split-fish cargoes, and the repeated purchases and sales of vessels—the money for all these quite private speculations was merged in the business, and the store could not buy him out without going to pieces. He smiled wryly. He need not even think of the downery which could not be bought out because he would not sell.

The only question was whether his father would actually bring the store to utter grief and then set the girls up there in a new business. Per of Bua had credit enough.

As he likes! thought Theodore perhaps; just as he likes! I'll run a store right alongside them and ruin them, if I can get a square piece of ground! There was still a smile on his lips as he went out.

Per of Bua suspected mischief, and then, too, he had been met with a strange smile—was he beginning to weaken? He did not even weaken, he roared. Lawyer Rasch was brought; he did for official liquidator as well as anyone, and he wrote for several days—wrote more than willingly; went through the store's books, telegraphed for the girls—telegraphed more than willingly for these young ladies and protected their rights. Here were two girls and a cripple all looking to him hopefully—could he disappoint such hopes? It was by helping people in legal matters where justice was in question that he lived. Per of Bua wished to arrange his affairs before he died, and his well brought-up daughters had no desire to prevent it. Nor did the son oppose it—no: "Go ahead!" said the son. What, then, should a solicitor do but come to their aid?

"Go ahead!" said Theodore with a wry smile. And he had at last managed to buy the bit of ground he needed—side by side with the store, a wide, square plot of ground; enough for a shop and a warehouse; all good hard rock. And when the cutter had been down south with the fish, she was to bring home a return cargo of building-material—no matches, no salt.

Theodore worked hard these days and was always wide-awake. His very first step had met with hindrances. Herr

Willatz Holmsen had not wished to sell him the ground. Why? thought Theodore. He was refused twice; the third time he enlisted petticoat influence and gained his point. He went to no one less than Fru Rasch. Ah! that devil of a Theodore knew everything, and he knew the good-natured Fru Rasch could help him with Herr Willatz Holmsen—right in the teeth of the lawyer.

"What is the matter?" asked Fru Rasch.

This—the store was being taken from him, the trade, all his business, he was under notice to quit, turned out—the lawyer was helping. "Now, you help me!"

"But I can't work against my husband," said Fru Rasch.

"Only a few square metres of rock from Herr Willatz Holmsen—not because he needs to sell, but because he can help me. I will build and work my way up again; the lawyer shall have the competition in trade he wanted at Segelfoss."

"I can't work against my husband," said Fru Rasch.

Next day Theodore received a few lines from Herr Willatz Holmsen saying that he might have the ground. "The bearer, my man Martin, will measure it; we will say a couple of hundred crowns for it, the price to be made over in the shape of provisions, ten crowns' worth at a time, to that rascal Konrad, at one time day-labourer with Herr Holmengraa. The Sheriff of Ura will make out the conveyance."

Theodore had got so far.

He began to blast away the rock to make a cellar and foundations. He blasted with dynamite, close alongside the store; not with the direct purpose of frightening the life out of his father, but neither with any wish to spare him. Per of Bua began by bellowing, but when the lawyer had explained the position, he did not make another sound. Not he! The chicken and his mother were mistaken if they thought he would beg for peace! On the other hand, the lawyer came to Theodore one day and offered a kind of compromise. No doubt the lawyer had seen at last that the

store could not buy Theodore out without a shock to its stability. He said:

"Your cash deposits together with your legal share of the estate——"

Theodore copied from time to time the good traits he found in others; he had considered what young Herr Didriksen would probably have done in a case like this, and he interrupted the lawyer, saying:

"I waive my claim on the estate."

This unlooked-for announcement came as a shock to the lawyer. It was extraordinary how these upstarts were beginning to ape their betters; now, if it had been a man of family!

"You needn't hold your head quite so high, young man!"

"High or low, it's no business of yours!" answered Theodore.

"It was a piece of friendly advice."

"I don't need it."

"Well," said the lawyer, "that wasn't what we were going to talk about. The position is this: that the store can very well buy you out and still carry on the same business——"

"Buy me out, then!" said Theodore.

"I have a private proposal to make," said the lawyer. "You might let me explain it without interruption. Well, the store can do it all right, buy you out; particularly as you relinquish your share of the estate in such a youthful and perhaps somewhat reckless manner."

"It's none of your business."

"Not directly."

"Nor indirectly—in no way whatsoever. It is not in my line to give away bank-books, but I don't lend money either," said Theodore, exasperated. "You hold your jaw and go your own way; I won't accept your proposal—do you understand?"

With great forbearance the lawyer proceeded:

"It is in your own and other people's interests that I am sitting here and listening to your—jaw, as you call it——"

"You know very well that I can distrain on the store for goods and claims until I am covered!" shouted Theodore, furious. He had become Per of Bua's son and showed that he knew how to hiss. "You know, too, that if I do, the store must be ruined. If you don't know it, then I can tell you so—I know more about this than you—I've traded ever since I was born."

Now, either the lawyer found some truth in this or he thought it best to let the boast pass—he said:

"This, then, is my private proposal: that the business should go on as before in the interest of all parties. You to manage it, but your sisters to be joint-owners. Do you agree?"

"No," answsered Theodore.

"But you will manage it? Can't you agree to be manager as heretofore?"

"No," answered Theodore.

"Hm!" said the lawyer. "I draw your special attention to the fact that the proposal is my own and no one else's. It is quite possible that it may meet with opposition on the part of your father and sisters. That contingency will not arise, however, if you decline to negotiate on that basis. Hm. What is your own proposal in regard to a settlement?"

Theodore answered:

"I have no proposal whatsoever. You and the others wish to kick me out, and I say: 'Go ahead and do it!'"

"Very well, then this is how it will be. The business will continue until further notice, under supervision of course——"

"Supervision!"

"Of your parents and sisters. Or of myself on their behalf."

Whereupon Theodore smiled very grimly and said:

"When you come to supervise me in my business, you can count on finding the door locked and sealed with the

sheriff's seal until I am bought out. Is that what you want?"

"No. I want only what is best for all parties, young man. Don't let your anger run away with you; you will be bought out—the Segelfoss Loan and Savings Bank may step in, possibly—the store has property enough."

"That's excellent!" said Theodore. "Let your bank step in—the sooner, the better!"

After the lawyer had left with his object unaccomplished, the girl Florina came to the store. She could wait no longer. But Theodore was now just in the very humour for a fight, and he did not mince matters with Florina: "The money is yours when the child is there."

"What? Not before?"

"No."

Florina turned this over in her mind for a short time, her eyes all but closed.

"Then I'll write to his sweetheart and tell her. Her name is Ruth, I know that well."

"Yes, just you do that, Florina! For then the doctor will examine you, and you will be arrested on the spot. Just do it!"

Florina laughed: "I'll be arrested, shall I? Gracious me! You're getting just a little too uppish now; is that because you're leaving the store?"

Theodore did not care a fig at that moment for the fact that he had a good customer before him; he gave back rudeness with rudeness:

"Just you go home and think about yourself and not about me; for twopence I'd spit on you. You were going about with toothache three weeks before Didriksen came here on his way north—there are witnesses enough to that. The magistrate will have to take the matter up, and then the reason the lawyer gave you a bank-book will come to light too."

What a way to speak to a good customer! It was clear that Theodore was fighting for more than mere justice—he

was fighting, we may suppose, for the big notes which at that moment lay in his pocket-book and filled it to bursting—the notes he had control of for the time.

The girl Florina, truth to tell, changed colour a little before his vehemence, probably because she was a woman—one of the weak and soft-hearted sex. Tears came into her eyes as she said:

"I wouldn't have believed you could be so shameless!"

"You open your mouth once, and you'll see!" said Theodore, making the most of his advantage. "I won't listen to another word!" With that he put on a swaggering air, used a pocket handkerchief of Swiss silk, and stuck it into his breast-pocket again, so that a big piece hung out.

"Very well, the lawyer will help me," said Florina, drying her tears.

"The lawyer? Don't you believe it! The lawyer can't even help himself in this matter."

"Don't you be quite so sure about that," said Florina.

And, after having it out thus with Florina, Theodore of Bua was just in the mood to go over to Segelfoss Manor to thank Herr Willatz Holmsen for his kindness. He took the deed for the sale of the ground with him; he took the money too—the two hundred crowns: it was a shame to support a man like Konrad, who didn't deserve it!

Young Willatz's forehead wrinkled slightly. Indeed, as there was a strange gentleman in the room, Young Willatz could hardly do otherwise than frown when his orders were not complied with.

"Have you not read my instructions regarding these two hundred crowns?" said he.

"Yes, oh, yes!" answered Theodore of Bua uneasily. "And if it is your wish——"

"Yes, it is my wish."

The strange gentleman was a friend of Willatz Holmsen's—his name was Anton Coldevin, a grand gentleman too, by all appearances; but he sat there staring at Theodore haught-

ily, and that was almost harder to bear than Willatz's superiority.

"I only thought—I know all the people hereabouts better—but of course——! Well, good-bye, and thanks for what you have done. I'm at work on the ground already. Thanks, please do not trouble; I can go this way very well——"

Theodore went out, as he had come, by the back way.

II

THE two friends were left together.

"You did not try very hard to show him out the other way," said Anton Coldevin, laughing.

"That's the shopkeeper here; he's said to be a smart fellow," said Willatz. "He had just bought a small piece of land from me."

"And you did not agree as to the method of payment."

"No. I had given him instructions."

Willatz was dissatisfied with himself probably, and for that reason said no more. What an idea, indeed, to support a rascal in spite of his better judgment! But, of course, one had to stick to one's word, once spoken, even thought one were doing a foolish thing.

What had Willatz done, exactly? Konrad was idling about—he was certainly hard-up. Willatz had seen him coming from the split-fish rocks in the evenings with his dinner-can in his hand; after that he had lost sight of him—the fish were dry; Konrad was out of work. Probably Willatz reflected, as was true: What have I to do with the man? He had a comrade, Aslak by name; with him Willatz had settled accounts. Konrad, on the other hand, had got nothing. No, but then he had earned nothing. Then the man turns up on the road again and Willatz meets him; this

happens a couple of times, and the man salutes him each time—Konrad takes off his cap to him. Willatz looked at him out of his grey eyes, and then he did for the poor fellow the first thing that entered his head—the same, very likely, as his father and his father's father would have done—gave the poor chap a couple of hundred crowns, ten crowns at a time.

But what if, to make matters worse, the rascal should come and hold out his hand and thank him? He might have the cheek to do that even!

"Land!" said Anton. "What if I were to buy some land from you, too, and settle here?"

"You wouldn't succeed your father as Consul in that case," said Willatz, a little tartly.

Anton Coldevin was never at a loss for an answer.

"Who can be like his father? Do you flatter yourself that you are?" he asked.

What a tone between friends! These must be close friends to be able to make fun of one another, to scratch each other's eyes out in jest. Anyhow, they were host and guest. From the very first day this had been their tone, and it grew freer all the time, till they gradually drifted into extremes of friendly rudeness that were astounding but magnificent. It was the guest who led his host on, all the time.

Pauline comes in with coffee. It is easy to see where Pauline's eyes are, and she does not answer the strange young gentleman once, though he talks coaxingly to her.

"I have been here a whole week now, and it's time you began to look a little at me too, Pauline," he says. And when Pauline has gone, he goes on talking to Willatz: "Those are wonderful eyes that girl has!"

Taken all in all, Anton Coldevin was a jolly fellow, bold, with a spice of vulgar assurance. He had had a commercial education at St. Cyr and had made the most of it; he had entered his father's business and had shown himself very

efficient. His father could quite well begin to spare himself now and cultivate idleness and a double chin.

Anton and Willatz had not seen much of each other since, in their school-days, they had met here at Segelfoss in their holidays, the one from France and the other from England, both of an age, both well-born, each as good as the other, but at the same time very different. They had kept up their friendship by letter, and now when Willatz came home in the spring he had begged his friend to accompany him. Anton had answered: Yes, he would come—and try and take the *golden bird* from him!

The *golden bird?*

His tone was already a little too free, and Willatz frowned at himself for having invited his friend.

The *Golden Bird* was the name of the Coldevin firm's new iron barque; a fitting name for it, but not in this connexion; for since they were grown up Anton had met Fröken Holmengraa only once or twice causally in Christiania. And, besides, was it good taste to allude to her fortune in that mercantile way!

"She can't be taken; she can only be won!" Willatz had replied.

"I don't know a single one who can't be taken!" was Anton's retort.

It was evident that the two friends had drifted far apart; there were soon many differences between them—in all friendliness—and it was well that Anton could not be away from his business more than a fortnight and must go home again then. But in the short time at their disposal the friends told each other many home-truths.

At the first Anton was quiet and well-behaved in Herr Holmengraa's house—so reserved that Fröken Mariane thought she must help him and remind him that they were old friends. That answered at once.

"You are sitting there looking at my rings—what do you see?" she inquired gaily.

He is thinking of what they cost, Willatz said to himself, no doubt.

"I was looking at your hand," said Anton.

"What did you see there? That I am to be married?"

"You mean how often."

"Oh, fie!"

"Yes, that's the kind of man he is!" said Willatz. "A nice well-bred fellow I have brought to my house!"

Then they all laughed—Anton's laugh was a little forced.

"I'm not thinking all the time whether I'm well-bred," said he. "Nor whether I'm high-born or English. I'm French —I'm natural."

"I'm Norwegian," said Mariane.

"For which we love you, Fröken."

To begin with, no doubt, Willatz had meant to smooth over his friend's rather marked familiarity—he knew Anton now, and knew what might be expected of him. But Willatz soon stopped bothering about it; it was Anton's own look-out if he chose to go too far.

"Well, you are getting on so well together that I can go," said he.

At which they all laughed again, but Mariane exclaimed, with annoyance:

"The score! he's working at an everlasting score!"

"He's a prodigy," said Anton. "He was born on Christmas night and he played the piano almost as soon as he was born. But I dare say it's the same with him as with other child prodigies: by the time the child has grown up, the prodigy has disappeared. Isn't that so, Willatz?"

This was perhaps a little too free and easy. Mariane looked down into her lap, and Willatz answered:

"Ha, ha! It may well be that you are right! Well, good-bye for the present! Now be very good children!"

But it was not long before Anton realized that he ought to have gone when Willatz did; Mariane looked after him through the window, and her talk was no longer gay. It did not help much that Anton was quite smart in his own

way and said many good things and declared that he had come to Segelfoss for no other purpose than to see her again; Mariane answered: "Impossible! Is that really so? Well, I did try, to be sure, ten or twelve years ago, to make an ineffaceable impression."

Anton went to Herr Holmengraa's house daily, carrying with him his flippancy and youth and assurance. He noticed that Willatz continued to be in his way—this man with a Manor and musical talent and nothing else; whereas he himself had a business. The whole thing was ridiculous—nothing would ever come of Willatz; then why did she show such preference for him? Was it written in the Book of Fate? On one occasion she took a bit of fluff off his shoulder while they were talking together—it was as though the fluff was on her own shoulder, she did it so naturally.

We can forgive our superior—yes, that we can do. But we cannot forgive our equal for getting ahead of us. Anton was accustomed to be a success wherever he went—here he missed the mark. Nothing he could do helped him. He had, indeed, points of contact with the master of the house, with Herr Holmengraa; they both talked with interest of the war in the East, of trade with South and Central America, of freights. Willatz—completely out of all this—sat and listened. The fact of his being such a nonentity should have been against him, should have reduced his chances—not a bit of it! Heavens! what foolishness! And Herr Holmengraa, as they sat there and talked, even said in a very flattering way: "You will be sure to do well in South America, Herr Coldevin—if you have luck!" To which Anton replied: "The barque will be sure to have luck. She is called the *Golden Bird!*"

Thus passed the first week.

So we have the two friends sitting there together, with their friendship grown somewhat cool. Anton repeats that Pauline has such wonderful eyes, but adds that they are about all she has.

"Is it of her dowry you are thinking?" asks Willatz sarcastically.

"Can she manage a house?" asks Anton. "We have a country-house at home, cows and a separator. It is the greatest joke: at night when the girl has plenty of time she separates herself to sleep, but in the morning when she is busy she turns the crank like mad to get done with it. I wonder if Pauline is not something of the same kind."

"No," said Willatz.

Anton looked at him and smiled:

"Excuse my laughing at the way you settle certain things as your father would have done. You imitate him."

Willatz got up to go. Anton expressed surprise that a host could treat a much-honoured guest so inconsiderately as to leave him. What could the guest do?

"Well, for instance, if you went over to Herr Holmengraa's again," said Willatz, "you would save me sitting here and listening to your rude remarks any longer."

"It's that score again, I suppose?"

"Yes, it's the score."

"That everlasting score, as Fröken Mariane said. No, I'm not going to Herr Holmengraa's first to-day. Why are you so ready to send me to Herr Holmengraa's house? Is it because I am so harmless?"

"Entirely harmless you are not. You do yourself harm."

"You hope so, no doubt. Do you know—I won't drink this last drop of liqueur with you; I'll drink it alone."

"For shame! I'm your host."

"No, I'm not going to Herr Holmengraa's first to-day," said Anton. "I'll go there afterwards, but first I'm going somewhere else. What was the name of the young gentleman who was here?"

"Do you mean Theodore? Theodore Jensen, Theodore of Bua?"

"Good. I have thought it over and now I feel hurt that you should have treated him so superciliously. What had he done to you?"

"Nothing."

"This young man is a trader, a business man, a kind of colleague of mine in his way—in a small and restricted way, of course. I am hurt on his behalf—you did not see him out."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want him in."

"You called him a smart man yourself, didn't you? He is worth a great deal more than you, of course. He's a man who does something. You, we know, are nothing."

"My want of business training makes it difficult for me to answer you," said Willatz. "Nothing? What nonsense is that? It sounds strange, but even the least of men is something. Now, take for example the business man—the middleman: he does not buy to use, but to sell again at a profit. Let all men buy for their own use, and the middleman vanishes—so easily is he wiped out. You and Theodore Jensen vanish. You are the nothing you spoke of. But even you are still a little something—you have, for instance, the power to keep one person inside and another person outside your room."

"I will go and pay him a visit," said Anton. "Excuse me if I didn't hear a word of your philosophic disquisition. Did you say you were able to keep whoever you chose outside your room? Does that apply in general?"

"You're talking nonsense."

"If it applies to my colleague, Jensen, then it applies to me."

"Do you wish to drive me to do something rash? Is that what you wish?" asked Willatz, with a strange undertone in his voice.

"I don't care what you do!" retorted Anton. "Come along, and we'll go a bit of the way together. I am going to my colleague's. Don't imagine that I am going to give that up."

And in fact Anton Coldevin went to the store; he

pretended he wanted tobacco, and had a long chat with Theodore.

The situation with regard to the store's liquidation was explained to him, and the fact that two sisters and a solicitor were to carry on the business while Theodore himself started another business alongside them—madness and suicide, but unavoidable. Anton was very friendly towards Theodore, and Theodore, on his side, was ready to burst with importance over the stranger's visit.

He wished to give an autumn fête, he said; an excursion to his downery with music and refreshments——

"Have you a downery too?"

"Oh, well—one has one thing and another: cargoes of split-fish, a downery, a general agency for 'Goshen' butter, a theatre——"

"Fancy! A downery! With eider-ducks, eider-down?"

Theodore nodded: extra fine quality; first-class; a little hut on the island; and might he indulge the hope that a man like Herr Coldevin would take part in the fête——?

Thanks; it was not at all impossible. Fancy, a fête at a downery; it was like grinding diamonds for food! When was it to take place?

Some time from now. It could not take place, of course, before autumn when the birds had left their nesting-places——

"I will find out whether Fröken Holmengraa will be there," said Anton.

However, Anton had not paid this visit solely on account of his colleague, Theodore, but also for the sake of Theodore's sister, who was the superior parlour-maid at Consul Coldevin's house in the Westland. It was only polite that Anton should pay a visit to her relations; but he did not make much of it. "I bring you greetings from your sister," said he. "Thanks," answered Theodore. "She's coming soon; she is to join in throwing me out!"

Anton went to Herr Holmengraa's house, and there he found Willatz had gone thither instead of to the tile-works

and the score! Such a sly fellow, fie on him!—Anton would have no more consideration for him, but would leave before his time was up! Willatz could have smoothed matters over a little, probably, if he had explained. But no, he did not explain. He could have said, as was true, that he had tried to work, but could make no progress—he had stuck fast to-day, as on so many days—hence he had sought the society of human beings again, to cheer himself up. He did not say a word. It was a part of his English affectation to keep silence. Anton thoroughly despised English airs.

"I called on the storekeeper, Jensen," he said. "He invited me to a fête at his downery in the autumn. It's sure to be amusing and I have accepted the invitation. I'll come back for the party."

"Good! then you'll come back to us again!" Willatz might have said. "Take me with you to the fête!" Fröken Mariane might have said. Neither of them said a word.

"The Rasches are to have an autumn fête too," Fröken Mariane stated at last. "Shall you be there, Willatz?"

"Shall I be invited?" he asked.

Silence.

"It would be like you," said Mariane suddenly, "to get yourself invited just in order to refuse."

Anton looked at the two in surprise—so they had fallen out; they were squabbling! They were welcome to, but he did not wish to hear more.

"Excuse me, Fröken Mariane," said he, "it was your father really whom I wished to see. Do you think I can speak to him for a moment?"

"Sit down and wait a little, and he'll no doubt come," answered Willatz, himself preparing to take his departure.

"My father is up at the works," said Mariane. "I don't know when he'll be home. Can we not all walk up that way and see if we meet him?"

All agreed—Willatz a little unwillingly and after looking at his watch.

When they reached the main road leading from the wharf to the mill, there was a man standing on the road waiting. It was Konrad. He saluted and came forward a little as if to say something. Anton was the only one who stopped; the two others went on.

"Why did you say what you did?" asked Willatz, laughing. "He must have got the impression that we had fallen out."

Mariane's eyes became mere narrow slits, almost closed.

"What if he did get that impression!" said she. "It doesn't matter!" Then she changed the subject: "There is trouble with the workmen again."

"Again?"

"I don't quite know the reason—of course any little thing is enough. So far as I understand, they are offended about a slip of paper, an order to the store. They have been used to getting goods down there and having them charged to the works; papa has now made a rule that no goods are to be delivered on account of the works without an order from the master-miller or the works-foreman. The workmen wanted this slip of paper done away with. 'It is an insult, it is like being labelled,' they said."

"Yes, they have grown so very thin-skinned," says Willatz.

"But, after all, the trouble died down, and for a very good reason. It turns out that Ole Johan can't write; so the workmen write the orders for him themselves and put down what they like. Ha, ha, ha! yes, I *must laugh!* No one went to Bertel of Sagvika for orders, because he can write —they all went to Ole Johan. And at last they did not go to anyone at all, but just wrote them themselves; then Theodore got suspicious and the matter was inquired into. And this afternon two of the men came to papa and said: 'Let the guilty pay for the goods they have got by fraud!' 'I will dismiss them,' answered papa. But these two would not agree to this; papa must go up to the works with them to discuss the matter, they said."

"Did he go with them to discuss it?" asks Willatz.

"What was he to do?"

"I don't understand why your father keeps his mill going any longer."

"He has his reasons, no doubt; at least I suppose so. Everyone has his own reasons. I ought to provide him with a son-in-law who could help him, I suppose," said Mariane, "but I'm not doing so."

"Just you dare to!" said Willatz, jokingly.

"I ought by rights to get him a son-in-law," continued Mariane, "but I don't believe I'll be able to."

Willatz laughed loudly and with all the confidence of a proprietor. "Only wait a bit," said he, "a month or so, maybe less. I don't get on so badly every day."

"We are waiting for a score. That's what we are waiting for."

"I should like to be a little more than I am before you take me. Don't undervalue this noble trait in your humble servant."

Probably Mariane was unable to assume the same playful tone, perhaps she did not care to either. She should have understood that Willatz's gaiety was forced and his flippancy assumed. Did she not see the quivering of his eyebrows? It grew worse the more plainly she spoke. Clearly these bald speeches of hers jarred on him—as that she was by no means at such a loss to provide for herself. Ah, these random phrases, which she flung out recklessly! He knew well that in her inmost self she was not really indelicate; that she was still as sweet and lovable as that day when, as a young girl, she had begged him to give her a "long kiss." But he knew, too, that her travels and the acquaintances she had made since then had altered her ideas in many ways. She was at times bold—bold as her Norwegian contemporaries; a strange spirit seemed to enter into her. The way she would, in company, accept applause for some free, not over-refined remark, had given him real torture; time after time it had caused an estrangement between them and ended in jealousy followed by reconciliation.

But Mariane—ah! she had the cunning of her Indian great-

grandmother, you see, and knew well what she was about. Neck or nothing! she thought, no doubt.

Mariane said: "We are leaving Anton behind, I see. There's no doubt about it, Willatz," she went on; "once you have got a thing into your head, nothing can move it."

"Perhaps I am tiresome," he owned.

Then she let slip the following remark: "I believe we have been a little too much thrown at one another's heads all these years."

This must have been undeniably true, for he nodded and nodded again.

Anton came running after them. "Excuse my having stayed behind," he said. "Willatz, I was to convey thanks to you."

Willatz knitted his brows. He had known quite well what Konrad wanted, and had avoided him on purpose.

"I say! I was to convey thanks to you," repeated Anton, persistently. "I won't deliver them without some acknowledgment. You only look at me?"

"Yes, I look at you, so to speak."

"Whatever you do or don't do," said Anton, "at home in our part of the country your behaviour wouldn't have passed muster. Here comes a man wishing to thank you for something and you will neither hear nor see him."

Willatz answered:

"You had your chat with him. You are a friend of the people."

"Good Lord!—to go putting on airs as you do with life all round you!" Anton burst out in honest indignation. "I don't understand how you can! Your father could do what he did because it came natural to him; but you—you do nothing but exploit the tradition of your father's greatness."

At this Mariane burst out laughing and made Willatz laugh too.

"A fine speech for a friend and a guest!" said he. "He's on pins and needles for fear he should not be rude enough."

"A friend of the people," mimicked Anton. "Well, what

is one to do? I don't envy you your benightedness; it hides life from you with all manner of fastidiousness and absurdity. Look, there's life!" he said, pointing.

They had met a couple of carters; they had been working with flour and their faces had a comically corpselike appearance. "Gee up!" they said to their horses. The wagons creaked under the heavy burden; the men walked beside the horses—walked beside them day in, day out. When they got to the wharf, they unloaded flour and loaded rye, carted the rye to the mill, and took flour down to the wharf again. Day in, day out.

"I fancy I see you taking part in that life!" said Willatz.

"I do take part in it in my own way," replied Anton. "It is just on that account that I want to see the mill-owner—for a little enlightenment, a hint. I trade and traffic, even if not with flour. You go home, Willatz, and marry Synnöve Solbakken!" [1]

And again Maraine laughed; but this time alone.

"Why, he doesn't laugh," said he. "Can't you laugh, Willatz?"

"Only if you command me to find it funny," he answered.

Herr Holmengraa came towards them, smiling his greetings, as placidly as if he were the happy father of each and all—a model of equanimity. Mariane asked whether he had discharged the sinners; but her father only smiled and answered that there were too many sinners.

"Here now, you talk about life—here's an instance for you," said Willatz to Anton.

They all three assisted in explaining the case, and Anton said, at the end:

"Well—then there has not been any supervision."

Here Willatz laughed. "Quite right!" said he. "There are faults on both sides; that's what all the papers will say. And if it's taken into court, all the judges will say the same. I am to give the workman work and pay, but, if he steals

[1] Translator's note: The reference is, of course, to the heroine of Björnstjerne Björnson's well-known romance of the same name.

from me, we are to divide the blame—I ought to have given work and pay to others to supervise the workman, and then work and pay to overseers of the supervisors. And at the some time the workman demands an increased wage for good work, otherwise he will strike."

"What would you have done with them?"

"If there was a shortage of riff-raff in the world, I'd let them live and increase."

"If I were you, I should be disposed to arbitrate," said Anton to Holmengraa.

Whereupon Willatz threw back his head and laughed again very heartily for him. "Quite right!" said he. "Ah! Anton Fredrik Coldevin—isn't that your name!—you are a jewel of modernity of the first water!"

"Of course, I didn't mean arbitration with regard to the wrongdoing, the offence itself," said Anton, annoyed. "But if one goes to extremes, all the workmen will make common cause and the works will be stopped. I think Herr Holmengraa quite realizes that. Let the workmen themselves pass judgment; they won't refuse to do that. The arbitration should deal merely with the orders on the store—the so-called labels: whether they are to be kept on or done away with."

"Were very many of them guilty, papa?" asked Mariane, tired of the discussion.

"Yes, a great many. They all seemed to be, with the exception of Bertel of Sagvika and Ole Johan."

"That is to say, with the exception of the supervisors. But what kind of goods did they get delivery of?"

Herr Holmengraa smiled: "Many kinds. Even sail-cloth, even petroleum."

"Well, I never——"

"They pretended to little Theodore of Bua that our own petroleum cask had given out and so they ordered one to meet their allowances. The sail-cloth, they said, was for bolting the flour. The margarine was for bread and butter when they worked overtime, for when that happened they were to have food, so they said. Ha, ha! yes, they're beyond

everything! The practice has been going on for a long time."

Anton shook his head, and he had probably never had better reason for so doing; the lack of supervision was altogether too gross.

"What are you going to do about it, papa?"

"One can't do anything—there are too many to punish."

"Besides, it would be a double-edged punishment."

"Oughtn't your book-keepers to have noticed it at once?" asked Anton, almost boiling over with business acumen and expertness. He forgot that the mill-owner might not care for such a great show of interest. "Didn't a detailed account come from the store?" he asked.

"No," was all Herr Holmengraa answered.

"Yes, but——" Anton began, but stopped as Mariane smiled at his eagerness.

"I see I must lay all my cards on the table," said Herr Holmengraa, smiling too.—He had at one time told Theodore that a detailed account was not necessary, as there could not be many entries. He had wished to show little Theodore this mark of confidence, which he thought he deserved, nor was it the lad who had cheated. The said Theodore was a very distant relation of his—his mother was something like a second cousin of his. Herr Holmengraa had helped the family to make a start when they first came to Segelfoss.

"That's it, is it!" said Anton.

But he must have thought, all the same, that it was a strange way of carrying on a business. It was possible for a very wealthy man only.

They were standing at the parting of the roads where Willatz was to turn off to his rooms at the tile-works—to his score. He was already raising his hat:

"By the by, Herr Holmengraa, do you know of any experienced woodsmen for me?"

"Woodsmen?" said the mill-owner, coming back from his own world. "I have no doubt they can be found. I have

inspected your forest to the best of my ability and I believe some of the timber is usable."

"Thanks!" said Willatz, and left them.

So little did Herr Holmengraa seem to be affected by the trouble up at the works that he was able to give polite attention to quite a different subject. But there was the very faintest tone of annoyance in his answer which had not escaped Mariane—what did it mean? She knew nothing of the matter that her father, too, might have had to inquire about: the mountain tract he wished to buy or lease—the waste pasturage for the thousand mountain sheep—what about that? He did not mention it. Mariane thought: he is annoyed probably that Willatz cannot arrange about his timber-felling himself—that he needs help in everything!

She stuck her arm under her father's and said softly, without looking at him—nay, as if she were not speaking at all:

"In the name of your children, I must protest against your going and getting angry with Willatz!"

"Oh, you little Indian girl!" he answered, laughing.

No, he was not angry with anybody. When they got home he invited Anton into his study and had half an hour's talk with him about conditions in South America, and gave him useful information—Anton found it a pleasure to listen to anyone with such knowledge of the subject. Yes, Anton, to judge by all he told him, had arranged things to the best advantage for the *Golden Bird,* said Herr Holmengraa; but he must count to a certain extent on good luck too! Anton's venture seemed to interest the old adventurer, King Tobias. "Send me a word or two about the result!" said he.

He remained behind in the study when Anton went into the parlour.

Mariane must have suddenly discovered that she was wearing too much jewellery; during this half-hour she had taken the large golden crescents out of her ears and put pearls in instead. Anton noticed this at once and thought she looked less bizarre. These crescents, dangling on very thin gold

chains, were probably Indian, or—should he say?—musical finery; the pearls made her more European. She let him say as much, and answered: "Do you think so? I'm glad."

"Does my approval please you?"

"Yes, it does."

"Really. Well, I don't understand that," said Anton, naïvely.

He spoke of leaving in a day or two—"Let us see when there's a south-bound steamer again; Friday?" Yes, he would leave then. But he would come back when the eider-duck was gone.

What did he mean? who was the eider-duck?

"God bless me—!" cried Anton. What do you suspect me of? The eider-duck? I mean when the eider-ducks have left the downery—the nests at the downery—the storekeeper Jensen's downery."

"To be sure, I forgot that you are coming back for the fête at the downery."

"Especially if I and the fête may hope for your presence."

"Mine? You must excuse me!"

Some time after Anton had thought this over, and took offence again: Well, he intended to take part in this fête given by his colleague, the merchant Jensen. A clever man—an up-to-date fellow, was the so-called Theodore of Bua; look how active he is—how his activities spread in ever-widening circles! He's a man of the future! Some people seem to live in the past. They are stone-blind, but they go about with eyes so fixed—so firmly fixed that they even seem to have an expression of wisdom in them. But they are stone-blind. These people ought to have an island of their own out in the sea—they are not aware that life means daylight, trade, artillery.—"What harm could it do you, Fröken Mariane, to take part in a public fête at which everyone would be delighted to see you?"

This had no effect; he talked to no purpose and Mariane said she did not wish to hear any more about it.

"Very well!" said he. "But I'm coming again in the

autumn. I'll put up at the hotel—what's it called?—Larsen's Hotel."

When Anton had gone, Mariane brought out some old needlework, looked at it, and laid it down again. She took a book and read a few lines—took up a pack of cards and began to shuffle them. Suddenly she opened the study door and said she was going out again just for a short stroll.

"Yes, do," replied her father, kind and gentle, as usual.

Then he was left behind, all alone in the whole of his end of the house. Something had happened to him since the moment Anton had left the study: was it possible that age should steal upon one so suddenly? or was it heavy thoughts that weighed upon him and made him unkingly? He had no papers in front of him and he was not working on any particular calculation—he was sitting, gazing—out of pale-blue eyes—at his own hands; no, the freemason ring had not saved him, nothing had saved him—not even his mystic sidelong glances, not certain little signs he had made in the air, as if he stood in communication with the unseen—the workmen had got the better of him. They had begun, without more ado, to treat him as one of themselves and to call him Tobias. It was like a dig in the ribs. They had lost all respect for him; they had seen him again on the hunt for girls at night; he had made believe that he was making an inspection of the forest for Willatz Holmsen, and he had got right up to the hill-farms toward evening and had asked for a bed. Ho, ho! you are a fine figure of a freemason, Tobias; you are just like any one of us and not a whit different! And now you've raised the price of flour again! You haven't squeezed us enough, we have a little drop of blood left yet. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? And if we write out a little slip of paper and go to the store and get what we need to keep soul and body together, you come down upon us like a slave-driver and count up every farthing. Shame on you!

Some of the workmen were less violent and showed some

sense of justice; they nodded condescendingly and admitted that the mill-owner was right in some small matter. "That wasn't so stupid, after all!" they said. "He is not quite mad, after all!" said they. And this was almost the hardest to bear. Aslak had left the mill, but Aslak's spirit had stayed behind.

No, this was more than he could stand; sure it was that he had not been born to be a master of men, but only to come and go like a fairy-tale prince. Folk had come now to think: Heaven alone knew what was the truth about his wealth. He speculated; he made money, he lost it—maybe he had not a million left to lose! That was what settled the question for his people. Why did he raise the price of flour? If he did it because he was forced to, why, then he was no whit better than any other man in Segelfoss, and why should they respect him? Shame upon him!

What is he thinking and musing over, and why does he gaze at his hands? Has he realized to-day that the new method he has been trying for some weeks has miscarried? What should he try now? He is as much a born peasant to-day as he ever was—his imagination did not usually quite distort the truth for him—he kept near the earth even when he flew. If he had raised the price of flour again the previous week, it was only after careful and exact calculation—he could still undersell other millers by a sum more or less equivalent to the freight—why shouldn't he do it, then? The people? It was easy to see what people thought of him: if he were not rich, he was nothing! They were very much mistaken. To compare the course of the people's life with his life was like comparing an everyday occurrence with a stroke of fate. His riches? What was it they were so anxious to know about them? Perhaps his wealth was there right in front of people's noses—perhaps it was not. Possibly he was not possessed of as much as a gold-digger will find in a single day—what then? Perhaps he had more—no one knew. And from time to time Mariane, who was

wily and clever, would want to know what was in various telegrams and letters her father received. "Tell me, papa," she would say, by way of jest, "why you sent your son back to Mexico while he was still a child, and had him taught to manage property and handle a ship." "In order that it might seem to you as if I had property and ships in Mexico!" he replied mysteriously.

But if Herr Holmengraa had come hither to Segelfoss only out of caprice, then his long sojourn here in the face of labour troubles and the steady decline of his own personal repute was surely absurd. Could he not live anywhere in the world? Why, then, was he here? There seemed to be nothing to tie him here—neither Fru Irgens nor her cookery; workmen nor mill; roads nor river nor harbour—nothing. Or had he a craving, perhaps, to live and breathe on his native soil—that inborn instinct, almighty, not to be denied? In that case, good people, he would trample you underfoot—would pursue his course and trample you underfoot like so much straw.

He trampled no one down—he had not the gift; he was no ruler. A ruler? He could not even keep his wealth—could not always meet a workman's scorn with dignity. Is he not sitting in his study now, brooding over the malevolence of the world? All went well with him so long as he was a king and a myth—all went splendidly—creation bowed before him. Afterwards things went wrong. He belonged to the holm; he was one step, one generation removed from the peasant—a peasant and yet not a peasant. What more could be expected of him? And yet—for Segelfoss he was romance; a star above a common thieves'-market.

He takes a turn out into the dining-room and comes back again; he has stolen round, listening at the doors, and sits down again as though he is safe—the master of the house has found safety! And now, little by little, his thoughts seem to brighten—he smiles. What, in heaven's name, was there to brood about? It was true, he should certainly not have been so foolish, so young again at this time of day. Girls can

never hold their tongues about what the mill-owner does; they ask one another: Has that happened to you? where? how often? Ah! this Sindbad the Sailor, this madcap, this youth with grey hairs! Had not Fru Irgens had trouble these many years in finding maids for the house? There were lands and coasts far away from where coffee-bushes bloomed, where bananas and sugar-cane gave off sweet scents, and the nights—the nights were for seafarers and dare-devils. There were islands with yellow, black, and white maidens. On second thoughts he ought not to have examined Willatz Holmsen's forest so carefully; after all there was nothing very attractive about the hill-farms except that the girl Marcilie had a young sister there. Her father drove him a bit of the way down the mountain on a cart; her father is always willing to drive him.

When the men at the works thought of him as their equal, they were wrong. He was anything but that. He had ideas and great plans in his head. The mountain-land for the thousand sheep was an item only in a long train of thought which ended in a canning-factory and export trade. He could install electric light and put up mechanical workshops. He could plow by steam. But he could also interest himself in getting a druggist and a bookshop for Segelfoss, and could even take to shopkeeping himself and earn three thousand a year and be on velvet. Ha, ha! there were lots of things he could do—take advantage of little Theodore's foolishness and absurdity, and suddenly come forward as a competitor! If one new plan did not work, then he could begin with a still newer one; he could do anything. However, little Theodore, we are not likely to come and disturb you in your store—you may rest secure on your hillock and still be your mother's constant pride! We have some other litle plans on hand—one bore fruit yesterday, in the Pacific; here is the telegram! The war needs our little boat, our splendid little boat, the *Owl*—she could not see in the day-time, she sailed by night, sailed in A Thousand and One Nights laden with diamonds. Sail her over to us! says

the war. Two hundred and twenty thousand, if you please! She cost us but sixty thousand, little Theodore! But we regret the sale a little now—she was a good boat and sailed freighted with diamonds. A young lad was in command —Señor Felix; to-day he captains another boat—Señor Felix is the man for a venture!

Herr Holmengraa makes a fresh round of the dining-room, and when he takes shelter in his room again, his breast-pocket is bulging. Seamen have breast pockets like that at times when they are townward bent. Evening has come; Herr Holmengraa looks at his watch and goes out. On the door-step he meets his daughter. "Well met!" he says, just for fun. "Thanks," she answers, laughing. They are always such good friends, such chums. He did not ask her where she came from, nor did she ask him whither he was bound.

He idled away the time at his wharf-office—he arranged one thing and another, and set the wharf-manager's assistant to an urgent task which would take him many hours. By that time the night was as dark as it would be at this light time of the year; the alleys and the paths among the Segelfoss houses could be plainly seen.

Baardsen comes out of the telegraph office and rolls his shoulders slowly down the road to the quay. Everyone knows that this irregular man is regular in this one thing: in going out at night. He thinks, he philosophizes, has his eyes about him, smiles at something he notices, frowns at a noise. It is good that it is summer; he does not wear a great coat, he has weighty matters on his mind, no doubt, since he is so exceedingly careless about his clothes. His trousers sag as he walks—the cloth itself sags—it is poor stuff, and they are frayed about his heels. But Baardsen does not trouble about his trousers—that is one good thing about him—and when he looks at the frayed edges he says he is wearing trousers that are too long for him. Altogether, many a merry and many a wise word drops from his lips, and at times he will come out with a splendid piece of eloquence.

He wanders about the quay for a time—he knows every case and every barrel standing there; then he hears a noise, frowns and makes towards it. The night is calm—someone is talking near one of the cottages, near the wharf-assistant's cottage—it is the assistant's own voice, abusing someone; he is angry about something and is driving a man before him. You must know that as the clerk is the leading bass in the wharf-manager's Choral Society, he could have talked much louder, but now he is whispering, hissing in a low voice: "That's why you gave me night-work—what a damned pig you are! What do you want here? You're always hanging about the cottage, but by good luck Daverdana is not that sort—she won't open the door. I can promise you that!"—He drives the man before him while he hisses again: "What—the devil! Did you ever see such a dirty dog! What are you grinning at? If I did as I should, I'd break a stick over your back."

Master and man! thinks Baardsen, doubtless, as he goes away. He looks back sideways over his shoulder and sees that the master is moving away all the time, smiling pitiably. What else was there for him to do but smile pitiably and look embarrassed! Baardsen had matter for deep thought: he would have rescued the master from his man if there had been a chance of doing so; he might even slip in to Daverdana now and soothe away fears aroused by the noise outside her cottage to-night—and here, indeed, Baardsen smiled as if he were pleased with the result of his meditations. But now the hunted master has made up his mind: suddenly and as though he had chosen the spot beyond which he did not wish company any longer, he began to make off in earnest—he bent forward and ran; in a moment he was out of sight. The man followed slowly and silently, going back, no doubt, to his work at the wharf again.

Master and man! aye, the tale was a thousand years old—nor did Baardsen see any chance of its ending this

year. He could see a beginning to this single instance: a foolish elderly man—by condition a widower, or rather in a widower's plight. He held himself in check so well once upon a time; he does so no longer. Listen to this grave-like silence of the night—it seethes, it rages; it is like him. There was nothing essentially thievish or savage in what he was doing: if his man must not be present, he must be got out of the way—all life is everlastingly coarse; it is made up of shameless audacity.

But was the master shameless as a rule? On the contrary—he was well-behaved and generous and thoughtful. It was a thing not to be reasoned out—Baardsen made up his mind once for all that no one has ever been able to fathom it: the wind does not blow by rule, but there it is; one cannot talk of thunder-coloured stockings.

Baardsen had probably been sitting telegraphing for some time and had been thoroughly clear-headed before he set out into the night, for he took a long walk beyond Theodore's theatre before he turned and went back the same way. He was in good spirits and his brain was active, but when he reached the wharf-assistant's cottage he was struck all of a heap for a moment, for there stood the hunted master again! He has lost all self-control, thinks Baardsen; there is no one in Segelfoss he cares to control himself for! The devil knew what to make of it, but though Baardsen had really no business at this cottage that night either, something must be done—what could be saved, must be saved—this gentleman first and foremost. Without a "good evening," without any preface, he goes straight up to Holmengraa and says:

"I forgot to note on your telegram the day before yesterday that the time was uncertain."

Was not this enough to give him a shock? But no, Holmengraa took it quietly.

"Indeed!" said he.

"The time-limit for your 'Yes' or 'No.' The time had a cross below it. It was an important telegram—I ought

to have made a note that the time of dispatch from Puerto Rico was indistinct."

"I understood the cross," said the mill-owner.

As he was turning away, Baardsen said abruptly:

"Come a few steps with me! A mistake in the time may have the effect of making your answer too late. It is a question of war; every hour is important."

"I do not mind if my answer does arrive too late," said the mill-owner.

"A big sum was at stake, a fortune."

"Oh, yes!" said Holmengraa.

They walked along together, talking. The wharf-assistant met them—he must have suspected mischief again; he was on the hunt; but when he met these two together, he passed them quietly, touching his hat.

Holmengraa has been reserved hitherto; now, all at once, he feels grateful to the telegraphist, and expresses his gratitude by the heartiness of his manner. "But I understood the cross all right," said he. "If the deal goes through, I'll be a ship the less. She was a good ship—she carried cargoes as valuable as diamonds. If the deal does not go through, she will carry cargoes again. That's how things stand. But the deal is almost sure to have come off, or I should have got another telegram to-day."

They spoke of other things, still walking on along the road—now they could dimly see the dragon-heads on Lawyer Rasch's house and they passed his plantations. The mill-owner grew more and more talkative; Baardsen noticed that he talked more than usual, and rather at random. And now they had come so far that they could see Herr Holmengraa's house up above them.

"Let us sit down for a little," said the mill-owner.

Yes, indeed, he was talkative; he began to talk of islands where there were coloured maidens; he rambled on, using extravagant terms for old and well-known things, repeating at intervals some expressions of his own invention which Baardsen could have greatly improved upon. "Is it not

true, as I say, that love is a temporary disease? So one must find out some way of coming to terms with oneself—don't you agree?"

The mill-owner was no drunkard nor was he a rake; his irregularities had nothing to do with disease. But he was a transitional type—every now and again he got off his hinges, and for an evening he would play the fool. Baardsen was beginning to find his chatter painful, when the other suddenly took a flask from his breast-pocket and held it out. . . .

The sailor on shore-leave offered it; but Baardsen, though not easily taken aback by such offers, said: "No thank you," grew pale and rose. Perhaps he did not wish to deprive Holmengraa of it. "A thousand thanks," he said, "but I must do a little work when I get home, and I really dare not! But that's no reason why you shouldn't take a glass yourself, a toast to your big deal."

"Yes," said Holmengraa, rising too, "yes, that's so—a little glass in honour of the bargain. It's good wine, I brought it with me—I was going to see someone and give them a glass——"

"Well, I'm keeping you; you're tired and want to get to bed," said Baardsen.

"I'm not tired," answered Holmengraa; he took a sip and then thrust the flask into his pocket again.

"Good night, then!" said Baardsen, and, taking off his hat politely, he moved away.

A strange man! thinks Holmengraa, as Baardsen leaves him. "Good night, then!" he says, though I'm not tired and don't want to go to bed.

But Baardsen plunges once more into the utter silence and peace of the night. He philosophizes for a long while yet and thinks out existence pretty well to its depths—he'll be hanged if he can understand it; and he looks across at the wharf-clerk's cottage again, and who is there? The master. For the third time—the master. He has a key, and he is letting himself in.

III

THE same evening that Herr and Fru Rasch held their garden fête, the magpie up near Herr Holmengraa's house set up a tremendous screaming. Dame magpie is one of those who, having taken up her perch in her own tree of an evening, wishes for peace and quiet; but if she be disturbed she will scream, warning all the other magpies that they too must scream their hardest and between them they get up a mighty screeching.

The magpie up at our place is making a fearful noise! thinks Fru Irgens, who is at the fête too.

Yes, the lawyer and his wife are holding their garden fête at last, their autumn fête, and the whole of Segelfoss is there, of course. Baardsen, of the telegraph station, is not there, for he has never called yet in all these years, and so there could not be any question of inviting him; but, apart from him, no one had been forgotten, and all the workmen were invited in a body for bread and butter and tea.

"And when Willatz Holmsen comes," said Lawyer Rasch to his wife, "you will sit still in your chair until he is in the room—you're not to treat him at all ceremoniously. Watch me, Kristine, and mark how I behave, and then you'll be all right. And when Willatz Holmsen says he is going, I don't intend to try and detain him."

Ah! Lawyer Rasch had to teach his wife such a lot about life in society; she did not understand fine distinctions. What if, for instance, she had followed his example and carried her handkerchief in her sleeve as he and Doctor Muus did? Oh, no! He got tired of guarding against her mistakes and corrected them only when they became too flagrant: "Listen, Kristine, one doesn't tilt

up one's plate to get the very last of the soup—remember that. No well-bred people do that!"

Fru Rasch was foolish enough, maybe, to think that her husband bullied her a little, but she had no reason to do so—if she had taken it in the right spirit she would have been grateful. Naturally, as she was a woman, the chances are that she was ungrateful.

She was a good-looking, faded woman, honest and a little stupid, so that she did not always realize what she was saying. As a girl, she was gay and of the marrying kind; as a woman, plump, grey-haired and sentimental. The wharf-manager—ah, no, it had not been written in the book of fate that he was to be hers! He was here to-night with his choir, and just now, when they sang out in the garden, she had had to run up to her bedroom to hide her tears. God bless him! And who knows if it was not to her he sang—to his sweetheart of former days, Kristine Salvesen? She had given Lawyer Rasch her hand, strongly counselled and urged thereto by Fru Irgens—it was God's will, no doubt—and now she had two children whose like was not to be found—unless perhaps it was Willatz Holmsen; Willatz Holmsen when he was little——

And Willatz did not even come this evening. No; since Anton Coldevin went home, Young Willatz had been more his own master again and was working hard. He had just sent her—"Dear Fru Kristine"—a card, with thanks and greetings to her husband too, to say that he was at a difficult point in his work and would have to work steadily to get past it; he did not dare to come to the fête.

"Well, well!" her husband had said. But Doctor Muus has come, at any rate, and Herr and Fröken Holmengraa are here, and Fru Landmarck and her daughters are here!" The lawyer could have mentioned others: the sheriff of Ura; the editor and compositor of the *Segelfoss News,* the merchant Henriksen from Utvær; Per of Bua's two daughters—the Misses Jensen, to wit—who had certainly blossomed out a good deal, and had watches hanging on

their bosoms, and had become quite fashionable. But their brother, Theodore of Bua—he was not there, because there was strife and ill will between him and the lawyer.

All the guests were gathered outside. The summer was somewhat advanced, to be sure, but it was mild and beautiful still, and no one wore wraps—at least, the girl Florina wore her yellow cloak of Swiss silk, of course, though she had to wait on the guests; but for everyone else it was warm enough without coats. And the garden or park itself, with all its beds and shrubberies, and other splendours, was in its fullest glory. There was nothing wanting: the fountain played; the grass on the lawns was green; the paths were graveled and bordered with shells; and numbers of wooden benches and round tables had been bought in the south for the fête, and the tables were made of sheets of iron and gave with a loud ping when anything was laid upon them.

It was here that the actual fête was held; it was here the new photographer photographed the whole company while it was yet light, and it was here that the people stayed on until far into the night. But the grand and important guests took their seats, as the evening wore on, on the veranda or right inside in the parlour and drank punch, and toasted one another and talked. It was really a delightful garden fête, and there can be no doubt that Doctor Muus expressed the general feeling when, with raised glass, he made his speech in honour of the garden and the Rasches' house. It was wonderful how Doctor Muus could stand and talk and hold the attention of a whole company! His deformed ears were perhaps the worst thing about him—his whole face beamed with intellect and his spectacles sat on him as on a Japanese scholar. His speech had, this evening, a symbolic meaning, for the doctor had now got a post in the south and was going away. He praised the laying out of the garden and the grounds: but where were the nightingales? Now it was true enough that there were no nightingales down south either, but he who was leaving them was

at least going nearer to the nightingales—"Welcome after me all those of you who are for the South!"

"Thanks," said Lawyer Rasch. "Thanks," said Fru Landmarck, and pulled out her handkerchief and waved to the doctor and cried: "Bravo!" The wharf-manager had mustered his people outside the veranda; they hawked and cleared their throats and struck up the song:

—I din Ungdoms Vaar,
I din lyse Sommer.[1]

And now it was the lawyer's turn. He jingled his keys and stood there immensely bulky and overfed; but a determined and plain-spoken man for all that. Nightingales! said he; no, he had not any—not yet. But he had introduced one or two other things into Segelfoss—he had set an example in a small way. What was this spot before he came? Waste land. What was it now? Park and fountain and exotic trees had, under his hands, clothed the waste; a villa in modern style, such as they had in the south, had arisen, and he was even now in treaty with certain iron-founders for two works of art for the garden. But—that was not all—the lawyer had a somewhat more serious object in this gathering: now, when there were so many well-to-do men and women present, he wished to propose the foundation of a Segelfoss Improvement Society—for president they might choose whomsoever they liked so far as he, the lawyer, was concerned. In the meantime he would thank them all for coming, thank them all individually, in his own and his wife's name, and propose a toast to the friend of the house who was leaving them—the friend whose loss would be irreparable—Doctor Muus.

Hurrahs and bravos, and a song by the wharf-manager's choir.

[1] Translator's note: Björnstjerne Björnson's song, beginning: *"Syng kun i din Ungdoms Vaar, i din lyse Sommer."* = Sing, only sing, in your youth's spring, in your radiant summer.

But the evening was not at an end for all. Many of the guests left. Herr and Fröken Holmengraa left, and the sheriff of Ura went too, with his friend Fröken Holmengraa. But the doctor did not go, and Fru Landmarck and her daughters did not go; these guests stayed to supper and prolonged the enjoyment of the evening.

And this room of the lawyer's was indeed a room worth sitting in! It was not full of modern rubbish in *Jugend* style, with square lamps and paintings by the young untried artists; no, it was a model of solid homeliness. The taste of the master of the house had been handed down to him—an old official family had left its impress upon it, but here it rested upon a foundation of ample means. There, for instance, was a bookcase with glass doors, and it was for the works of the poets only, but—since all the poets are dead—no living poet found a place on its shelves. And then, too, there were hangings and squares of machine-woven Gobelin in plenty upon the walls, and on the little tables lay two albums with photographs of Rasch's family and friends—yes, and there lay also the telegrams to Rasch and his wife on the occasion of their wedding, bound into a book with the lettering and the date in gold. The whatnot was crowded with imitation-old candlesticks and conchs and shells and pretty stones and glass bottles and Christmas-gift inkstands and biscuit-ware figures. Inherited culture everywhere. But Lawyer Rasch did not by any means stop short at inherited culture; he, like Doctor Muus, adopted modern ideas now and then, as long as they could be reconciled with the good taste they were born with. Thus, when Doctor Muus was last in town, he had sat at table on the steamer with some commercial travellers; their talk and ideas were nothing to him, but they used their knives in a distinctly new and elegant manner—they held them like penholders. This fashionable custom of the present day Doctor Muus adopted, and with a little practice he became more and more expert at cutting meat with a penholder. Nor was it long before the lawyer, of his own

accord, followed suit and learnt this trick with a knife, but, of course, he had much trouble in teaching it to Fru Rasch, for—like a woman—she did not learn anything of her own accord. Not that Doctor Muus was particularly pleased when he saw his accomplishment copied by the lawyer, and God knows whether a man who ate so much and had such thick and stumpy fingers—whether such a man could come of good family. When the lawyer complained of a weak stomach, it was probably affectation; Doctor Muus, on the other hand, inherited a really weak digestion, handed down through the refinement of many ancestors.

"How well they sang!" said Fru Rasch to the ladies from the parsonage, in an effort at conversation.

"Do you think so? Oh, yes—yes," answered Fru Landmarck. "Though we have heard very different singing down south."

"I only meant—well, that it was passable, not bad. However, I'm no judge."

"You are so easily pleased in such matters, Kristine," said her husband. "But of one thing I am glad: that we got the Segelfoss Welfare Society started. I'm glad of that."

The doctor always—on every single occasion—knew the right thing to say. He lifted his glass and congratulated his friend on his election as president.

"Oh, that!" said the lawyer indifferently. "One sacrifices oneself for one's friends. But now we must get up a bazaar and make some money. That's the first thing to be done. You must allow me to count on you, young ladies."

"Fröken Holmengraa is not very sympathetic," said one Fröken Landmarck.

"I should think not," said the other.

"It is my opinion," said Doctor Muus, "that one really cannot expect much of a lady who has not several generations of culture to fall back upon."

"And then her skin is so yellow. Does that come from indigestion, Doctor?"

"Ugh!—don't talk about indigestion!" said the lawyer.

The doctor pretended not to hear him and answered:

"No, that is inherited—inherited beyond all doubt. If one has any knowledge of anthropology, one can be in no doubt on the point. Remember, Fröken Holmengraa has Indian blood in her veins. She is what we call a quintroon."

"Think of her being an Indian!" says the one Fröken Landmarck.

"Yes, fancy anyone wanting to be an Indian!" says the other.

"I'm afraid about the sheriff," says the lawyer, following his own line of thought. "That he'll come to grief some day—that I shall be forced to put my foot down some day."

"Does the man live so shamefully beyond his means?" asks the doctor.

"He's an impossible fellow!" said the lawyer, in a tone of vexation. "He could earn quantities of money, but he doesn't know how to go about it, and if he does earn anything, he can't hold on to it. For example, just now, when we who could afford it, put ourselves down for five crowns each for the Segelfoss Welfare Society—the sheriff must needs do the same! But the man couldn't afford it in the least—half a crown would have been plenty for him."

"I didn't see the telegraph-master here to-night. Does he never go anywhere?" asks the one Fröken Landmarck.

"Do you know him?" asks Doctor Muus.

"No, we have only been to the office to send a telegram once," answered the other Fröken Landmarck.

"No, he goes nowhere," said the lawyer. "A man who never calls will not be invited to my house, at any rate. There are certain forms which cultured persons expect to be observed, otherwise we shall all sink to the same level."

"But I did think the last song was rather pretty," said Fru Rasch, suddenly. "Did you not think so too, Fru Landmarck?"

With a smile, and the greatest forbearance, the lawyer answered his wife:

"That's one of your good points, Kristine, that you are so easily pleased."

Fru Landmarck said:

"And this young Holsem over yonder at the 'Manor,' as it is called here—it is a nice enough house, but 'Manor'! The 'Manors' up in the north here are not much to boast about. He has settled down at home now, has he—the owner?"

"Maybe he has," said the doctor, as though he didn't know much about it and didn't take much interest in the matter.

"He was not here to-night either?"

"No. He too is one of those who are not over-polite," answered the lawyer. "But I invited him for the sake of my wife—one sacrifices oneself constantly for one's friends; she has known him from his childhood, of course. But it ended in his not coming."

"He answered and asked to be excused," put in his wife. "A very polite note."

"It would have been the last straw if he had not even been polite and respectful enough to answer, after I had done him the kindness of inviting him."

"Well, I don't know," said Doctor Muus," there are some people I have never been able to get on with. I couldn't make a friend of his father either—a man who never got beyond the rank of lieutenant. He thought, no doubt, that he could come and put on airs with me—he soon found his mistake!"

The girl Florina came in, saying: "If you please, sir, here's a telegram which I found where Herr Holmengraa was sitting."

A telegram to Herr Holmengraa—an opened one; from Puerto Rico on such-and-such a date—two hundred and twenty thousand for a ship—for the *Owl*—reply by such-and-such an hour. Felix.

"Felix, that's the mill-owner's son," explained the lawyer. "To think of his losing such a tremendously important tele-

gram! Go up to Herr Holmengraa with it at once, Florina."

This enormous sum of money closed all their mouths for a moment—it was as if it had fallen upon the table. Then they began to talk about it: "Two hundred and twenty thousand—Lord bless us, what big schemes and enormous sums of money the man must handle!" Even the lawyer was staggered: "Yes, it's doubtful whether the man himself knows how rich he is!" All these people used to small things had suddenly had a glimpse of a greatness beyond their ken, and it was some time before they came to themselves again. Holmengraa—that miraculous man—had lost a telegram, and Florina has gone with it—for, of course, it could not have been lost intentionally?

Fru Landmarck from the parsonage, perhaps by way of hiding her real thoughts, said: "Felix—that's a nice name, isn't it, girls?"

Yes, the girls thought it was. "Does he never come home?" they said.

"Home? He is at home already," said Doctor Muus, in a tone of annoyance. "At home with his fellow-tribesmen," said he.

Out in the park, laughter and little amorous shrieks were still to be heard, so that it could not have been very late; but when the shrieks continued, and it did not seem as if there would be any end to them, Doctor Muus said to the lawyer:

"Oh, I say! are those your constituents out there, that you put up with such behaviour?"

That went home. The lawyer looked for a moment as if he had been found out.

"I must say I don't begrudge the people their amusement while we have ours," he said.

"Wise Cadi," said the doctor, to heal the wound, "you speak justly and your words are golden! We others will gladly vote for you unconditionally—you deserve it. Don't misunderstand me."

"But there is no doubt that they have been having some-

thing more than tea and bread and butter out there," remarked the lawyer, mollified; "I have noticed that the whole evening. I'll see now——"

He arose and called out from the veranda into the dusk that everyone must leave the park now and go home; and many thanks for their company that evening.

Ah! the wise cadi should not have held his garden party so late in the summer. It is true, it was mild and fine, but it was also dark enough for much to happen. The plantations had suffered, the lawns had suffered, the gravel of the paths had been not a little cut up. And when the *Segelfoss News* came out, it announced in a leader on the fête that Lawyer Rasch would not open his park again for the amusement of the public. "This is much to be regretted," wrote the paper; "Herr Rasch and the public have always maintained good relations, but these the people have themselves brought to an end. When the fête was over, a large part of the plantations had been seriously damaged, and in the shrubberies were found no less than eighteen hair-combs, in one of which was a red bead. It is plain that this is disgraceful," went on the paper, "and it is our opinion that the community ought to compensate Herr Solicitor Rasch to some extent by nominating him for parliament. Let all men be up and doing!"

Solicitor Rasch to stand for parliament?

Yet the wise cadi should not have held his fête so late in the year—the evenings were getting too dark and so much may happen in the dark. What was it the magpie was screaming so loudly about? Nothing less, it turned out, than a burglary at Herr Holmengraa's while he and his people were at the party and the house was empty—burglary of his storehouse, a gross theft of pork and meat and cheese and butter and smoked salmon and dainties in jars—food of all sorts. Yes, that was what the magpie was giving warning of!

When Fru Irgens got home, she went straight to the key-cupboard, and all the keys were there, right enough. Fru

Irgens was an excellent housekeeper, and perhaps she felt a foreboding of something, too; in any case, she could never feel at ease about that little storehouse key which had been lost—she took the lantern and went to the store-room. Here she saw at once what had happened, and her screams brought the whole household and the sheriff too, for he happened to be there; and the sheriff took the light and examined everything carefully and found out all there was to find. That was little, unfortunately; possible tracks in the court-yard had been trodden down by other footsteps and the thief had not left any trace behind him. But the sheriff, and others too for that matter, discovered so much—that it was the little padlock in front of the storehouse which had been opened; the Yale lock which had hung untouched on the door all this time, but which now bore fresh marks in the rust around the keyhole. The lock was quite thief-proof, so it must have been opened with the key and locked again.

"If only the master had brought a lock from town with him!" said Fru Irgens, weeping and wringing her hands. "But it's my own fault!" said she, sobbing more and more. "I ought never to have let the key out of my hand, but should have kept it on me at night!"

Aye, there was a great to-do, but Herr Holmengraa himself took it calmly and quietly, and said they could no doubt manage to get a little food again. "Come along and let us all go in! Come, Sheriff!"

But while they were standing there, who should come strolling up from the Segelfoss Manor-farm but Martin, and as soon as he heard the word "theft," he said aloud to them all:

"Aye, it's Lars Manuelsen who has done it!"

Silence.

"Do you mean that?" asks the sheriff.

"Yes, I mean it!" And Martin was obviously not at all sorry to get Lars Manuelsen into trouble.

"Did you see it?"

"Yes, I met him with the wheelbarrow. And Ole Johan met him, and Halflapp Petter of our place, he met him. We met him, all three of us—we were walking together."

"Where did you meet him?"

"Here!" answered Martin, and took a few hasty strides down the road.

The sheriff held the lantern up and let the light fall on Herr Holmengraa's face, but asked no question. Herr Holmengraa said nothing.

"Why were you up here so late in the evening?" asked the sheriff.

Martin answered: "Well, anyhow, it wasn't to steal anything. We are in service at Segelfoss Manor with Willatz Holmsen. And this is how it happened: we heard a great screeching from the magpie, and so Ole Johan said—for he was at our place just then and there's not a thing he doesn't want to know about—he said: 'Come and let us see what the magpie is screaming for.' That's how we came up here."

Once more the sheriff let the light shine on Herr Holmengraa's face, but Herr Holmengraa said shortly: "Don't let us stand here talking about it any more!" and with that he went in.

The sheriff asked one or two more questions, as if to close the matter:

"Lars, you say? Did he say anything, or did you?"

"I said: 'Good evening,' but he only mumbled and went past quickly. Nothing more was said."

"You saw clearly who it was?"

"We'll take our oath upon it, if you wish. Bless you, sir, we all know Lars Manuelsen and his jacket buttons and his wig. He was carrying an earthenware jar under his arm."

"That was the jam-jar!" said Fru Irgens. "The raspberry!" said she. "Oh, if only I had met him!"

Fröken Mariane took the sheriff with her and went in and the other people separated.

But though Herr Holmengraa never said another word about the theft or the culprit, it got abroad in the town and the parish. There were too many who knew about it. Nor could the *Segelfoss News* keep quiet, but gave out the news in an article written in a highly legal style, which people thought originated with Lawyer Rasch himself. The article read as if hatred and revenge had found a vent in it.

It made a great commotion. But the wrongdoer must have felt very safe—there was something barefaced, almost threatening in it all: Larsen's Hotel must certainly have got hold of some of the fine foods, for it suddenly became an extraordinarily good hotel—at least some commercial travellers who visited the store with autumn wares declared they had never hoped to find such an hotel in this place, and that they would advertise it widely. How could Larsen's Hotel all at once dare to serve its guests with delicate smoked salmon and collared pork and raspberry jam—unless the whole thing was connected with Herr Holmengraa's last night-wandering? Yes, unless that was so! Lars Manuelsen was Daverdana's father, and the hotelkeeper, Julius, her brother—maybe both of them knew how much they might risk.

But Segelfoss was transformed; it was no longer the quiet and innocent Selgelfoss it used to be. Innocent? "Segelfoss has become a bottomless pit," said Lars Manuelsen himself, "and I'll send a letter to Lassen—my son Lassen—about it!" And quiet? No, indeed, it was not peaceful; many things happened here, if only on a small scale, and, though the place was small, there were upheavals, and fateful happenings.

And now came Theodore of Bua's fête on the island—the eider-down fête which had been hatched in Theodore's brain for no other purpose than to put the lawyer's fête into the shade. And if there was anyone who could evolve a wonderful plan for a fête, it was Theodore. But he had no attention of letting its whole grandeur be displayed

out on a barren island—his name and his business, above all things, must shine before the town of Segelfoss; and for that purpose he had in reserve something hitherto unseen and unheard of in the place: he had fireworks.

Ah, this double-dyed schemer of a Theodore!

He was very busy now; his new emporium was as good as finished, and when all the gilding and varnishing was dry he would be able to take possession. He had no longer time to attend to the counter himself. A man wished to buy gelatine—he was from the hamlet on the mountains and had bought gelatine before. "Let me have another five packets," said he, "of the same sort as the last." "Wait till we come back from the fête," answered Theodore; "don't you see I've flags flying?" "What are you flying flags for?" "You'll see all in good time!"

He was flagging for Anton Coldevin, he was flagging for the fête. Once he had had his assistant, Kornelius, standing on the flagstaff-hill for two days, and had worried the lives out of people by his secretiveness—that time it was on account of a great commercial traveller with his own steamer; but now? Oh, this was something unique! The mail-boat had arrived and his colleague, Anton Coldevin, had come, but Theodore went on flagging. Look out!—Theodore was capable of anything; he never fooled people altogether: there was always some reason for everything he did.

The afternoon was beautiful and calm; five boats lay ready for all the young folk, and there was quite a crowd down on the quay. Several of the young mill-hands had got a holiday too, and come down with their girls—as Fröken Mariane was going herself, it was probably she who had got this half-holiday for the work-people. Yes, there she comes, escorted by Anton Coldevin—she had given in without more ado and was going with him.

Without more ado? By no means. Anton had arrived in the evening, had put up at the hotel and gone to her

straightway. Would she go with him to the eider-down fête next day?

"Good gracious, I do believe you're crazy!" said she.

To which he replied:

"It does not seem to me that there is any proportion between my offence and your extreme astonishment."

"You think I ought to have expected as much of you?"

"Well, yes! let us leave it at that. I have merely come back, as I said I would."

And, after all, she could hardly help admiring this man's determination and energy. He did not waste his life in deliberating about things, but said a thing and meant it. Here he was again, though it had cost him a whole three days' journey. At last she said:

"I'll let you know to-morrow."

"Thanks," said he. "And promise me not to let my cause suffer overnight!"—This man, Anton Coldevin, was not tongue-tied, you see—far from it.

And in the morning they must have settled matters, for here came the couple.

Theodore of Bua went to meet them, and saluted them from afar. Ah! Theodore was in such a state that he trembled with joy and agitation, and did not know which way to turn. He fancied it would do for him to be a little facetious, and when Mariane said "Good day," Theodore answered: "A good day, indeed; good day and welcome to you!" But, at the same time, he was as polite as possible, and talked of gratitude—of the great honour done him.

When the boats put from the shore, Theodore provided a great surprise for town and country: he fired a salute. Aye, but not an ordinary salute with fowling-pieces—at ten different places on the mountain, he had loaded blast-holes with dynamite, and this he now fired off. The ground trembled. People stouted "Hurrah." "It's just as if the King were travelling," said Mariane. "The Queen!" said Anton, bowing to her. "I have ten other charges to fire when we come back," said Theodore of Bua, touching his

hat. But see! now he uncovers the gramophone and lets "God save the King" peal forth through the horn.—"The Queen!" said Anton, bowing. And Theodore touched his hat.

Poor little Theodore; he wasn't going to be left out, of course! Poor? He was worth his weight in gold. He was full of fuss and bustle and of affected notions; he believed, in his excitement, that he must needs be courtly and amusing all the time, and this led him into strange antics; the boy's strength lay in other directions, and on his own ground he was a top-sawyer. What a salute, what music and festivity! he thought. And that the whole of Segelfoss was left behind in a state of envy, he never for a moment doubted. Then, too, he had provided a whole boat-load of provisions and drinkables under the care of Julius, the hotel-keeper, and the baker and Nils the shoemaker. These three were to wait upon the guests.

"There's another boat coming after us," said Fröken Mariane.

"That's got our provisions on board," said Theodore, touching his hat.

He was always touching his hat, and kept his hand to it like a soldier at the salute. He had hit upon this idea suddenly, all by himself, and it was a deucedly smart idea. Later in the evening he added something more: when, in a loud voice, he issued an order to the waiters, he finished up with his own name, as though he were signing it. "Theodore Jensen," he said, all in a spirit of well-bred fun. He had put on a new striped suit to-day and was irresistible; he had a pair of boots—God knows whether they came from China or Vienna. "From Vienna!" said Theodore. They were sharply pointed and embroidered, with yellow velvet tops—they were truly exquisite—all they wanted was silver bells.

So on they went in the highest spirits, enjoying the music and the good weather. One strange thing about the girls to-day was that hardly any of them wore their hair-

combs. But they didn't seem to care—it was just as if hair-combs had gone out of fashion for good and all. And the whole party was in this care-free mood. The sea was dead calm, like an enormous sheet of tin-foil with the sun shining on it; several boats from other parts of the parish joined them and all were made welcome. "We heard firing," they said. "Yes, that's all right," said Theodore. There were such crowds of people at last, it was a good thing there was a whole boatful of provisions.

And now a new four oar came straight towards them—it was from Utvær and glistening with oil, and the sun shone upon it so that it looked like a little bark with a golden breast. On board were the ladies from Henriksen's of Utvær. "We heard booming and sounds of firing," said they. "That's all right," said Theodore, touching his hat; "we are going to a fête. Turn round and come too. Yours faithfully, Theodore Jensen."

They came; everybody came; the host was irresistible.

"Willatz should have been told," said Mariane to Anton. "Perhaps he would have come."

"I don't dare to call on Willatz at all this time. I wasted his time so badly when I was here last," answered Anton. "Now I am staying here incognito."

"Why haven't your sisters come, Theodore?" asked Mariane.

Theodore forgot to touch his hat. "My sisters? Fröken Holmengraa, my sisters wish to throw me out; they're mad, they're ruining themselves and not me. In a little I'll have my own firm!" And Theodore explained everything carefully, and without giving himself any more airs—he was on firm ground here. Finally he explained that he did not even have his meals at home any longer, but had them at the hotel, all on account of his sisters.

The sun is fast sinking; the sunset is so tremendous, with such deepest tones of gold and blood-red, it is like a deep soundless music from the depths of the sea. On a skerry sit two great gulls, their breasts shining like raw silk in

the evening glow. They turn their heads and eyes in the direction of the boats, but do not take flight. Mariane is somewhat pensive; she says: "How mysterious these gulls are! They live in a world of their own, and there, very likely, they are birds of high rank—most distinguished birds, perhaps. So that if they were to die now, their loss would be felt in the gull-world!"

Strange words, yet Theodore felt the better for them—they were wonderfully gracious. He had bought a little gift for Fröken Mariane as a thank-offering because she had been so very kind as to come to-day—oh! only one little handkerchief, worth five and thirty crowns, which a commercial traveller had said was fit for a present for any princess. And now everything depended on Fröken Mariane losing her own handkerchief during the evening.

"Aren't we nearly there?" asked Anton.

"Yes. That's the place where you see the flag."

"Do you fly a flag here too?"

"I do more than that. When it gets dark, we'll light torches and hanging lanterns."

It turned out that Theodore had had people out here to get everything ready. The whole party landed and went up to the hut. Wine and other drinks and cakes were served at once as a preliminary light refreshment. And while the cooks and waiters lighted the fire and began to lay the table, Theodore escorted the strangers round the downery. He was at home here and knew everything. It was our downery once! thought the ladies from Utvær, no doubt. And that was true enough. But then Henriksen of Utvær had run up a very heavy debt once, and so the downery passed into the hands of Theodore of Bua. Everything passes from hand to hand.

The island is untenanted now, the birds gone, their nests empty, and the down gathered for the last time; only the small roofs over the nests are left to serve the birds for shelter when they come back next year. A belated oyster-

catcher, with long red legs, runs away along the shore cheeping; gulls floated about the island.

One part was just like another and did not take long to explore; the evening was growing dark, torches and lamps were already lit by the hut. The three men with the provisions were at work according to instructions and were working hard. The baker, to be sure, had lost his own bakery through hard drinking at old Per of Bua's wine-counter, and so to-night he has been entrusted with the serving of bread and confectionery only. Julius, the hotel-keeper, is in charge of the drinks. Inside the hut he has ready wine and fine glasses to drink it from, and on the long tables outside aerated water with spirits in it. "Genuine grape-brandy!" said Theodore, and let people read the label. "Well, Theodore's the man for my money!" said the young people under their breath. And when the provisions were produced, it was a feast, and no mistake, that Larsen's Hotel had provided; and people drank aerated water and spirits and ate bread and butter with smoked salmon and collared pork and raspberry jam; and they had heard so much about all these delicacies that they laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks while they were eating them. "If only we don't get a wigging for it!" they said, making sly allusions. But when they had drunk a little more, they became bolder and said: "If only we aren't arrested!" Julius was taken up by his work in the hut, and so did not hear any of the ill-natured jokes; he was serving the gentlefolk—as many as could be found room for inside—and he had the finest of Theodore's tinned delicacies to regale them with, besides cold fowl, and preserves, and eggs cooked in three different ways, and biscuits and cloudberries. And he had beer and red wine for them to drink, and, to go with the fowls, he had a basket of champagne. Julius had read it all up carefully in the cookery-book and had pumped the commercial travellers.

What a feast it was! And when people remembered

Lawyer Rasch's fête, they had to be a little careful not to make unflattering remarks about it. Well, Theodore's the man for my money! The way he had timed everything exactly; the weather was just cool enough for the grape-brandy—it was the time of year when the leaves of the bushes are beginning to fall. The girls were so pretty—with the last of their summer bloom—and the youths put out the torches as fast as ever Nils the shoemaker lit them—because it was just dark enough without lights. Then couple after couple roamed away by themselves, and it was just cold enough to make it necessary for them to throw themselves on the ground and lie close to it and to one another so as to keep warm. One by one the stars shone out in the sky; here and there about the island a cigarette-end glowed.

Nils the shoemaker had grown thin and miserable again; he had probably not earned anything from the time of the theatrical performance in the spring until now when he had become torch-lighter and waiter on the island. And now these wild fellows were keeping him from carrying out his duties conscientiously! He went straight into the hut to complain of them. "They're putting my torches out," said he; "I light them again and again, and they put them out!" In order to keep him quiet, Theodore went out with him to look into the matter. "There's hardly a soul here," said Theodore, "but light them again!" Then Julius came out of the hut, too, and went up to Theodore and whispered: "I have her handkerchief!" So everything seemed to be going according to plan, and Theodore wound the gramophone up again, and plays a mazurka to call the giddy young folk back to a dance on the green sward—nay he did not even fly into a rage with the baker, who had seized a chance of getting hold of a bottle of spirits, and was as drunk as a fiddler already.

Then the couples come back one by one from their wanderings, and when they have had some more refreshment they begin to dance. What a splendid time they are having!

They laugh, they shriek and smoke cigarettes—this was something like a fête; Theodore for ever! Even the ladies from Utvær come out of the hut and dance round a little with the boys and let themselves go.

But now that one by one everyone had left the hut, only the gentlefolk were left behind at the emptied table—only Fröken Mariane and Anton Coldevin. Fröken Mariane was half reclining on a bench by the wall, and Anton said to her:

"Alone at last!"

To which Mariane made no reply, but gave him a quick look. Then he said again:

"That look of yours—no one else but you can bring it off properly!"

"Indeed?"

"Do you think I shall meet your father this time?" he asked.

"Do you really not mean to come up to see us?"

"Oh, yes. But in case I should miss him, will you tell your father from me that I have been lucky with the *Golden Bird?* Say my arrangements worked well and I was lucky."

Mariane nodded. Anton came and sat near her and said:

"I have wished that you and I might be walking along a road—that it should come on to rain and that we might shelter under the same umbrella."

"Indeed?" said she. "So you were lucky; you made a lot of money?"

"Oh, yes!'

"Then couldn't you help a man here with some?"

This took Anton aback: "A man? Who is it? Do I know him?"

"I don't know. He certainly needs money—how much, I don't know—a thousand crowns, perhaps."

"Hm. Well—there ought to be somebody more called on to step in than I, who don't even live here. But, of course—— Has he property? any security?"

"Security? No, I meant a gift. And I meant an anonymous gift."

Anton smiled: "It is so entirely unbusinesslike that it does not seem to be in my line. No, it's too subtle for me."

"Oh, well," said she.

"I scent an atmosphere of past centuries and of the artistic about it."

"At any rate, I know one person who would not have asked about security," said Mariane.

"Quite true!" said Anton, hotly. "I know him too. But he's not a man of business—he's nothing."

"He's gold!" said Mariane, putting down her feet and sitting up on the bench.

"Gold? Far from it. He's not even silver. He has to fell timber in his forest to make ends meet."

Mariane smiled. But Anton did not notice the smile; he continued:

"Gold? No. He has musical instruments and scissors of sorts and brushes, lots of gloves, and things made of onyx and malachite—but gold, valuables——"

"Something to serve as security?" suggested Mariane, and her almond eyes contracted until they were narrow as knives.

"Yes, something to serve as security—has he? Has he unencumbered property?" asked Anton.

"But aren't you friends?" she asked, astonished.

"Yes. But do you think I haven't said as much to his face? I've said much more. He's a relic of past centuries—he talks rubbish about art and nature and the State and the ethical life. I don't do that. I belong to this world—I trade and traffic, make money and spend it. Give a thousand crowns to a man? Certainly, if those are your commands. Only it seemed to me the idea was out of date and foolish. But, of course—— A thousand crowns, if you wish it. I'll telegraph for them early to-morrow. Isn't that nice of me?" he asked, and moved still nearer her bench.

"Very good, a thousand crowns," said she, dissembling

very artfully. "No, move a little further away, please, over there—yes, that will do. You see, I did not wish to mix my father or Willatz up in it."

"Willatz?" cried Anton. "He doesn't own as much as a thousand crowns!"

"Doesn't he?"

"I'll be blowed if he does! Tell him that with my compliments!"

"This same Willatz has more than you think."

"Willatz? He has, has he? He's lucky, if he has! But I simply don't understand all this fuss you make about Willatz. Unless it is that you pity him, that his harmlessness appeals to you. Don't you know that he's fooling you? Listen to good advice, Mariane—oh, yes! I came here to say this to you; I didn't come here for the fête. Well, then, it was for you I came, and here I am! Yes, I am coming near you, for I want to throw myself at your feet—look here! It won't do? I think it must and will do—you must listen to me now; I didn't wish to press myself upon you before, but the *Golden Bird* has done so well. It's not my way to gush about love and sleepless nights and so on, but I have been in love with you ever since my first holiday here at Segelfoss, and now you really must listen to me, Mariane. I won't pretend that I have many merits—I won't do that—but something I can offer you; I put Willatz entirely out of consideration—it's you and I who have to settle things between us."

"What!—what do you mean? Can't you stop?"

"Don't move away! To sum up, I offer myself to you—a sound man; accept my hand—I have never offered it to anyone else."

"No," said Mariane. "And now we won't say any more about it."

"I have come this long way to get you—to win you."

"You must be mad!"

"Be serious, Mariane. I offer you my hand—there's nothing mad about that; we have known each other from

our earliest childhood; I have waited for you ever since, rather than force myself upon you. I put Willatz out of the question."

"I don't."

"Nonsense. You know quite well that's impossible. Had it even been this shopkeeper—perhaps it is the shopkeeper?"

"No, it is Willatz," she said, rising. "Let us go out!"

"Just listen!" said he, rising also; the light from the lamp was shining in his face and annoying him. "Just listen—these piano-players without a future—I won't say anything about this particular one, since he is not here, but, speaking in general, it is the most ridiculous thing I have ever seen, the way women lose their heads about them. It's a sin and a shame. A woman is worse off with a musician than with a candidate for confirmation. Musicians cannot do anything—they can play; they're not men."

"But are you a boor——!"

He gave a kick at the lamp hanging under the roof—they were left in darkness. What did he mean by this? He could not have her, she growled. It was no use being violent and knocking things about; that was the worst thing he could do. The next moment completely upset her expectations, he made her helpless by throwing himself upon her, stopping her mouth, kissing her, embracing her—then suddenly he felt a stab, a pain in his thigh, and let her go. Had she used her silver pin? She wasn't wearing a silver pin—she had used a knife. She was in his arms; she had evidently no intention of falling into his power—was that it? But she had protested before she struck.

Theodore stood at the door: "I heard—was that the lamp that broke?"

"I broke it," said Anton.

"I'll bring another at once!"

Mariane went out and Anton followed. Their excitement died down; both rearranged their clothing a little; Anton felt his wound—he was still breathing heavily. But

Mariane was not out of breath, nor did she seem much upset any longer.

"Have you my handkerchief?" said she, and held her hand out behind her without looking at him.

"What? your handkerchief? No, but I'll look for it."

She spoke to him, so she did not hate him, did not detest him—the devil knew what to make of this girl, this mestizo! But he was thankful for her calmness and struck by her self-possession. She had not shrieked—only growled before she struck; and now she was asking for her handkerchief! Her beauty was not in the least obvious and ordinary—no, she was yellow and Indian-looking, strangely made and strangely coloured, not in the least classic. But he had felt that she was beautiful while he held her; he had felt what sweetness there was in her body and in her movements. He tried to assume the same tone as she did, and only said:

"Please forget it!"

"Of course," she answered.

Thanks. But, by God! that was the most original performance I've ever seen: did you use a knife?"

"No, a fork," she replied, showing it in her hand. "Put it back on the table again!"

He took the fork and counted the prongs:

"One, two—so I have three—I have four holes in me."

And now again the devil only knew what to make of this girl—she turned to Anton and said: "Please forget it!"

Theodore came with the lamp and Anton went in with him; Mariane was left behind, standing in front of the hut looking at the dancing. Did she excuse the man's mad behaviour, or did she admit there was some—just an atom of justification for it? He was not one of those who got what they wanted by stealth; no, indeed! he was not one of those thousand ordinary nonentities who would have gone otherwise to work. Was it possible, then, that his monstrous directness had appealed to her in a way?

"I can't find your handkerchief," said Anton.

Theodore came up, put his hand into his breast-pocket, looked about him, and abandoned the attempt—gave up something.

Coffee was served to everyone—Oh! that Theodore! "No, thank you; we will drink it here, with the others," said Mariane.—"You daren't go into the hut again?" asked Anton.—"I'm less afraid to than you are," she answered.

Punch was taken with the coffee, and Mariane asked what o'clock it was. "Isn't it nearly time we were thinking of going home?" But when the young people had had their coffee and their tass, the dancing became lively and energetic, and those who did not dance sat at the tables and drank more tasses—nothing could now add to and nothing lessen their high spirits, even Julius with his grape-brandy and his refreshments.—"Is there anything wrong with the refreshments from Larsen's Hotel, we'd like to know? Even Julius does not begrudge any of us a taste of the fine things from the storehouse. And, as for Theodore, I won't even mention him, for he's far and away above everyone!" In short, their spirits rose so high that they would have liked to put out the torches again and go off in pairs; but at this moment Theodore gave the command:

"All hands to the boats! Full stop. Theodore Jensen."

And so brisk and cheery did this sound that everyone obeyed, and tottered down to the boats and cried "Hurrah" and "Thanks for the feast," and "Hurrah for Full-stop Theodore." The baker, Nils the shoemaker and Julius stayed behind to put out the torches and stow away the glass and table-ware, though for that matter the baker was not fit for anything but to go off to sleep, dead to the world.

The journey home is made to the accompaniment of gramophone and merriment; no boat parts company—all keep together—they make quite a fleet. On Theodore's, on the admiral's, boat hang three bright lanterns, while a few stars twinkle high up in the blue bowl of the sky, so that

it is not dark, and yet not light; just right for perfect enjoyment. Yes, and Theodore has chivalrously taken the ladies from Utvær into his boat.

In Segelfoss harbour he sent up a rocket suddenly—it was a signal: ten dynamite blasts shook land and seashore again—a salute that echoed far and wide—"Long live the Queen!" said Anton, with more feeling than usual, lifting his hat to Mariane. Theodore touched his.

Now a rocket whizzed across the sky from the flagstaff-hill, other rockets rose from other heights—the surprise had begun—the wonder had come to pass. Those in the boats rested on their oars and gazed; they heard loud shouts from the people in the town; the rockets were followed by balls of fire, by Roman candles, crackers, golden rain, peacocks of fire—good heavens! Yes, and it went on, there was no end to it, it was lavish and magnificent—Theodore must have made a thumping profit on his split-fish this year.

"This is quite superb!" said Mariane. "I have never seen anything like the way you manage things, Theodore!"

"The fireworks? Oh, yes, I wanted to do things as other towns do them," said Theodore. He thrust his hand into his breast-pocket and pulled out a packet. Now or never! he seemed to think. He tore open some tissue paper and said: "Fröken Mariane, excuse me, if you have lost your pocket handkerchief I have one here. Please take this one. Yes, please take it."

"Oh, no, thank you; I don't need it, I shall be at home immediately."

"Look at it and keep it!"

Mariane looked at it, held it up to the lantern, was lost in admiration of it—"Lace, good gracious! But no; thank you all the same."

"Why not? If I wish to give it to you?"

"It is much too valuable. What am I to do with it? No, I can't take it."

Theodore saved himself with great presence of mind:

"I happened to have it in my pocket—it came to my firm—it is a sample."

Mariane merely shook her head.

The fireworks went out now—more than fireworks went out; Theodore preserved a humble silence. What was the meaning of all this hard-heartedness? She had sent a shawl back once—well, she did not wear a shawl. But this was only a little handkerchief!

Then he says to the ladies from Utvær—and the lad Theodore smiled tremulously, he was so deeply hurt:

"Won't you have it either?"

But no, they could not very well take it when Fröken Holmengraa had refused it. No doubt they would have liked very much to have this beautiful picture, this book-mark, but—"No, thank you, we have pocket handkerchiefs," they said.

"It does not look as if you would get rid of it," said Anton Coldevin, laughing.

And Theodore laughed too, but this was his way of hiding his pain and grief; he was very pale for a moment. Then he gathered up the pieces of tissue paper from the bottom of the boat and wrapped up the treasure as well as he could, looking very dejected as he did so.

Then they landed and went up on to the quay, and from the escorting boats which turned to go home again, there rose cheers for Theodore, and he himself stood waving his hat and shouting "Good night," and "Thanks for your company." Mariane held out her hand and thanked him heartily before she went off home attended by Anton Coldevin.

Yes, indeed, the eider-down fête had been a unique experience; people from the town stood on the quay gazing at Theodore, at the conqueror, and talking of the salvoes on the land and the wonderful sights in the sky. The man with the gelatine had waited, it appeared, and did not regret it, for never had he dreamt of anything like what he had witnessed this evening——! But Lars Manuelsen shook

his head and would write to his son, L. Lassen, and ask if these fiery signs and human inventions, flaming over the heavens, were not an insult to the Almighty.

IV

"I HAVEN'T seen you for a week," said Willatz to Mariane. "You didn't come the day you said you would?"

"Anton has been here," said Mariane.

"I know that."

"You know it."

"I saw him. You didn't come to me the day you said you would?"

"Then you know the rest too, probably. Which is that I was at the eider-down fête with him."

Willatz had not known that, and his eyebrows quivered slightly. No, he knew nothing about anybody these days, he was working so busily, so intently; he had wanted Mariane that day last week to listen to something, to act as audience and listen to something, but she had not come. He was working so intently, but so badly!

He had met her father on the road, however, and spoken a few brief words with him:

"I see," said Willatz, "that the leaves are turning yellow. It would be just as well if I had the trees blazed now."

"That has been done," said Herr Holmengraa.

"Done? I am very much obliged to you. When was it done?"

"It is just finished. So as not to trouble you, I took the liberty of getting it done to the best of my judgment."

"Thanks. And can you find me wood-cutters too?"

A strange man, this new Willatz Holmsen, as compared with the last! Herr Holmengraa probably thought; he must

have help and a hand lent him in everything. And though two men had been blazing the trees for several days and were finished now, the new Willatz Holmsen said not a word about payment, did not remember about it probably, had not the money for it perhaps. "Wood-cutters!" he said.

With the faintest suspicion of weariness, Herr Holmengraa answered: "I have no doubt wood-cutters can be found."

"Thanks," said Willatz. But he noticed, very likely, that Herr Holmengraa was tired, and, not wishing to detain him longer, he said: "Well, I won't keep you."

"You work so hard, Willatz, we never see you up our way now."

"Yes, I'm trying to get on with something. I suppose everyone has his troubles: I have been working in vain trying to thread a needle—during the last year I have tried with all my might," he said, laughing.

"While I think of it," said Herr Holmengraa, "have you thought over whether you will let me have some of your mountain land?"

"If you will excuse my speaking frankly," said Willatz, "I would rather not."

"Well, then, we'll say no more about it."

"Dear Herr Holmengraa, it may seem like perversity and ingratitude on my part, but my father, the old squire, begged me in a last letter to redeem instead of selling land!"

"We won't say a word about it!" said Herr Holmengraa. And probably no one would have guessed that the old speculator was delighted at heart over the refusal. He had replied with cold politeness.

This was what had happened when Willatz met Herr Holmengraa on the road.

Mariane was paying him a visit now. Was she going to keep up her father's coolness?

"Eider-down fête? What is that?" he asked.

"It was Theodore of Bua's fête. You remember the firing and the fireworks one evening? Well, I was there."

It is possible that she had expected an ironic remark: such as, that in that case it was not so very strange that she should have disappointed him! But no, he only nodded.

"But now I've come. Is it too late?" she asked.

"It was something I wished you to hear. So I let it stand over. However, I have discarded it now."

"What a pity! dear Willatz, if I can't always come when you call me——"

"I did not merely call you—it was very important for me. I invoked you."

"I am very sorry. Then, perhaps, I'm to blame for a piece of music being lost to the world."

He smiled back at her—he could face coldness well enough.

"Of course I ought not to be so dependent, but—— And I was not always so dependent either."

"No, that's true!" said she, with exaggerated readiness. She rose and went to the window as if to adjust a curtain. "For you have turned out one or two very fine things, haven't you?"

He smiled again: "Don't you remember that Grieg called them works of genius?"

"That's just what I say."

To-day Willatz was not the same as usual, whatever the reason might be. He who, when alone with her, was wont to be sensitive and touchy about his art, now jested about it; Willatz, who had so often been wild with jealousy, now sat there as if made of iron.

"Besides," said she, stretching up to a fold in the curtain and looking at him sidewise under her arm, "if you wish that your genius should be noised abroad, you will certainly have to go on living alone and keeping quiet about it."

The shot went home; aye, it left its mark on him—evidently she was intent on picking a quarrel with him to-day! But, as if he had made up his mind not to give her the satisfaction of a victory, he smiled again—sat gazing dreamily at his folded hands and smiling.

"What I say is true," she went on, "but you may do as you like for all I care. Anton is here still; do you know that?"

"Yes," he replied.

She turned away from the window quickly: "Do you know that?"

Ah, how he irritated her with his composure to-day! He answered: "You are not at all surprised at it, Mariane; your face does not show any sign of emotion. Of course, I know Anton is here; what then? I knew the whole time, too, that you were standing at the window wanting me to look and see why you were standing there."

That hit the mark too—her eyes nearly closed. But next moment she had control of herself again. She could have hissed—she could have used a fork, but she was clever enough to hide it. Ah! but might not all this cunning be useless to-day, might it not do harm only?

"I don't know what you mean," she said. "Look here! couldn't you play this, only this little bit from here?"

"Spare me to-day. It is not finished."

"I'll spare you every day," she said, really hurt. "Every day."

What thrusts they made at one another! Willatz, hard as iron, sat there as unforgiving as ever and asked:

"And now you don't wish to have anything more to do with me?"

"No," she replied. And at the moment this seemed her unshakable resolve. "As a matter of fact, it has never been more than a thread that has held us together."

Pause.

"Isn't that so?" she asked.

"We two also have been to fêtes, he answered.

There he betrayed himself—betrayed his jealousy through being off his guard for a moment. Had she noticed it?

"Remember me to Anton," he said, to retrieve his mistake. "When does he leave?"

Yes, Mariane must have noticed his slip; she answered somewhat shortly:

"He can't leave very well before the steamer comes."

"No. And when is that? But it doesn't matter. But tell him from me that I am by way of being busy these days," said Willatz, putting out his hand for the sheet of music.

"What is this? When did you get it?" she asked, pointing to a sword with a gilt hilt.

"My father's sword has hung there all the time," said he.

"Oh, has it? I beg your pardon!" And, happening quite by chance to look out of the window again, she cried out:

"There! he'll lose them—he can't go without his gloves! Well, good-bye!"

And with that Mariane rushed out of the door and did not even shut it properly behind her.

So Willatz had to get up and close it. And, of course, he had at the same time to give half a glance out of the window. Bah! only Anton! But he did not wear gloves—Mariane had made that up. The whole thing was a make-believe.

Naturally Willatz could not work after this—impossible; nor could he sing—he hadn't his mother's voice. No doubt he was a dull fellow at bottom; he could draw and paint like his mother, and he could dress well and finically like his father, but that was all he could do. But jealous of Anton? No, thank you; he could not help laughing at the idea!

Now would the coast be clear again and could he go out?

But he was to have more experiences to-day. The first was that Konrad was standing in the road—that rascal Konrad, the former day-labourer; there he stood, touching his hat, and his mate, Aslak, was sitting on a stone, and he, too, got up and touched his hat. Konrad fumbled with his wristbands for a time, and when he had finished with

them he held out his hand. Whereupon Willatz frowned even more than he had done before that day.

"I wish to thank you," said Konrad.

This doubtless got on Willatz's nerves—was more than he could bear; he said: "You have nothing to thank me for; remember that for the future. What else is it you want?"

Konrad understood that he had better be brief, and said: "We wished to know whether it would be possible for you to give us work."

Willatz looked him up and down from head to foot—it was the way his father had looked people over:

"Work?"

"Yes. For me and Aslak too."

Willatz eyed Aslak also. There stood the man he had given a thrashing to once; yes, indeed, and he had paid for having conferred this benefit, this box on the ear, on the poor fellow, for the good of mankind—they were quits.

"You can fell some trees I have had blazed," said Willatz.

"All right," put in Aslak. "Then you're going to cut timber? But isn't it too early?"

Willatz did not waste words—no, not a single word—he only nodded curtly, saying: "Go to the Manor and report yourselves to Martin, the headman!" And with that he strode past.

This hadn't turned out so badly—in fact it was rather lucky; he could spare Herr Holmengraa further trouble about wood-cutters. Of course, it was too soon to begin the felling yet, but there was plenty of work in the meantime for two men on his big estate. It was really most opportune, and he would go up to Herr Holmengraa at once and tell him.

Herr Holmengraa was affable and friendly once more: "So? Well, it would not have been difficult to get wood-cutters, in any case. Then they'll haul the timber while

the snow is on the ground, and float it down in the spring—and timber is money!"

This was quite all right, and yet it came as a little shock to Willatz: no money until spring! Hadn't something been said at one time about timber being so easily disposed of that one could raise all the money one wanted on a blazed forest? Did Herr Holmengraa expect an appeal? He would not get it!

"Won't you do us a kindness and stay to supper?" asks Herr Holmengraa. "It would give us so much pleasure; Mariane and I are such a lonely couple. It is true, Anton Coldevin has enlivened us a little these last days, but——"

Willatz could not stay, dared not, Herr Holmengraa, much as he would like to!

He went back the same way he had come, but now he had a fresh experience: a little above the bridge there was a clump of willow-bushes which grew just by the side of the road. Willatz knew the spot well—it was there he had kissed Mariane that last happy time before his first journey to Berlin. He saw Mariane and Anton there now. What of that? Nothing. Anton had given warning that he would catch the *golden bird*. Perhaps the pair had been standing there a while ago, when Willatz passed; he hoped he had not been mumbling something or talking to himself as he sometimes did!

There's Anton on his knees. On his knees. He is bare-headed, he is quite evidently proposing to her; Mariane is trying to get away, but he has arms round her skirt—round her legs; it looks so ridiculous. Was he proposing? It looked more than ridiculous—they were both speaking at the same time; Willatz could see by their movements that they were absorbed in their own affairs, and the roar of the river prevented them from hearing anyone coming. They believed they were safe.

Willatz thought for a moment of turning—he took a step backwards, and at that moment Mariane looked up and

saw him. She uttered a couple of hasty words, and Anton sprang to his feet and stood staring. The two friends gazed at each other, irresolute and bewildered, as if they belonged to different worlds. Then Anton picked up his hat, bowed to Mariane, and went away through the wood.

Had he taken to flight? It would not be like him to do that. Mariane must have said something decisive.

She came out of the clump of willows and stepped on to the road with heaving breast. In the midst of her great embarrassment, and even while struggling to keep back her tears, she yet was able to greet Willatz with a smile. A wonderful creature, Mariane; she was equal to anything. She said:

"You saw that, I suppose? It can't be helped; I don't care in the least. But I can't bear your having seen it. He's mad. Listen! how are you getting on—did you get any work done? See, there's his stick; I'm not going to pick it up even. What have you been doing up at the house with papa?" She takes out her handkerchief: "Oh, now I'll have a cold, of course; my nose is running already. And my eyes. Did you ever see such a thing, and so sudden! Tell me, did it matter? Did it look very bad? But didn't you see that he—that I couldn't move——"

"Good-bye," he said, and left her.

He did not look round once—catch a Willatz Holmsen turning his head!—so, when he got home to the tile-works and was on the point of going in and found Mariane standing two steps behind him, he gave a great start. Her gliding, noiseless steps had carried her there.

"I beg your pardon!" she said, because she had startled him.

"Go home!" he bade her. "Don't stay here, but go home!"

Her cold was gone, her handkerchief was out of sight, she had swallowed her tears:

"Of course I am going home. But won't you own that this is absolutely senseless of you? How could I help his holding me fast?"

There was no disputing this—no, it was so far from all common sense that he was silenced for a while. But it was not the first time they had quarrelled—they were both good at it—and he soon found words:

"Did you notice whether I engaged myself to you in here a short time ago?"

She did not answer.

"You would have disappointed me if you had answered otherwise than by silence."

"Can't we go in?" said she.

"Can't we go in! If you lift up your finger, we are to fall on our knees and gulp with emotion. Yes, of course we can go in. What has become of Anton? It would be playing him a nasty trick if you and I were to go in now and sit down together. What do you think?"

"No, it wouldn't be playing him a trick. He wishes to marry me, he says; and to-day isn't the first time he has said so. But I won't have him; I told him I'm not free."

"What is there not free about you? Nothing that I know of."

"The thing I call my heart is not free."

"That is strange. Why shouldn't your heart be free? Oh, well! you can bind it and loose it just as it suits you, of course. You are quite at liberty to deal with your little property as you like."

"Can we not go in, Willatz?"

"But since kneeling and squirming at your feet has not helped Anton—it is indiscreet of me to mention it, but what would you have? it is diamond cut diamond with us all—is it equally hopeless for me? If I were to stand here for an hour and beg and pray and implore you for what you call your heart—would it be any use?"

"Stop now! You will be sorry yourself for being so horrid."

"But if instead I were to burst out laughing and say: 'Thank you, good-bye'—what then?"

"Oh, this cold, it has got into my eyes!" said Mariane, taking out her handkerchief again.

He must have seen how shaken she was and that she was bravely keeping back her tears again. It was gallantly done.

"Go home!" he said.

"I'm going now," she answered, beginning to move away. Yes, indeed, she was swallowing her tears, but no one would have known it; no one had seen her give way to tears. She turned round angry and bitter, and threw back at him: "And if you are going away in the autumn with your opera, then good-bye!"

That silenced him again for a moment. Then he replied: "Oh, before you go, won't you remind me to send you some flowers to-morrow?"

They had wounded one another deeply, with horrible words, as if war or rivalry had set them at enmity—and this while they were engaged! Well, anyhow, things would not—could not very well be worse later. So they would not suffer the unpleasantness of going through married life feeling ashamed when they remembered all the tender things they had once said to one another. They were remarkable lovers.

With her cold and her handkerchief gone again, Mariane glided up the road as usual—she could think and speak again. A flock of screaming magpies were pursuing a man along the road; Lars Manuelsen came towards her in his double-breasted jacket with its eight buttons; he is the father of such a great man that he thinks he may stop anyone—he stopped Mariane:

"If I were your father, I would shoot all these mischievous magpies," said he.

"Won't the magpie leave you in peace yet?"

"No. The magpies follow me everywhere; it's a trouble; folk laugh at me, and I don't want that. These here are your magpies."

"You shouldn't have made an enemy of the magpie, then, Lars."

"Why not? The vermin, I'll poison every single one of them!"

"She takes her revenge, they say."

"She's done it already. I'm the talk of the place; I can't get away from it. Folk are blaming me for a theft up at your place; if only I could get evidence against them! But I've written Lassen, my son, that he must help me out."

"Oh, so Lars is coming?"

"You may depend upon it, Lassen will come if he can find the time for it——"

She met Anton. He has found his stick and is waiting for her. Is he, too, inclined to sarcasm?

"Did you put things right again with the man of gold?"

"No, I didn't," she answered. "And now let me beg you not to expose me to such an unpleasant experience again."

"I beg your gracious forgiveness!"

"My forgiveness depends on your future behaviour."

"My behaviour shall be amended. Allow me to hope for your goodwill!"

Anton, bowing deeply, went on down towards the wharf and the hotel. But when he was out of sight and had assured himself that Mariane was not watching him, he turned off towards the river and followed it up to the tile-works. He opened the door without ceremony and entered Willatz's room.

"Good day," he said. "Here I am. Do you want to say anything to me?"

"No," answered Willatz. "Unless it be to ask you not to come here and disturb me."

"You want to pass it off with talk?" said Anton angrily. "You won't succeed!"

"Your rudeness leaves me quite cold; it doesn't excite me," answered the other.

Anton was furious: "You can't get out of it, not even if it means a fight to a finish!"

"There's a good deal in what you say," said Willatz, thoughtfully, seeming to consider the matter thoroughly. "And afterwards you could lie on a sofa in there and sleep it off."

"More talk! It's true, I'm not used to boxing—to English sausage-machine work. But I can fence."

"I'm not used to French knitting-needles."

"No, but we can both shoot, I suppose?"

Willatz laughed aloud, saying: "Of course, you are ridiculous! But let's see; have you brought anything with you to shoot with?"

"No. You have revolvers on the wall here. It's true, they are poor, six-inch-long stumps of things."

"Eight inches," said Willatz, in an impartial tone. And he went on to describe the revolvers one by one quite calmly, without any extravagant language: "Have a look at them; they're clean and serviceable."

But Anton was still angry and unreasonable: "Probably you have made them useless because you expected me," he said.

"If I have, it must have been to prevent you coming and doing yourself an injury with them. And, by the way, you little madman, will you tell me what you have come here for?"

"Hasn't it dawned on you yet?" said Anton furiously. "I'm going to thrash you."

Willatz turned pale. He got up and said: "If I did not know you, I might take you seriously."

"I'm going to punish you for spying!" shrieked Anton, jumping about, quite beside himself. "You have no shame in you, you go about spying——"

Then it was that Willatz—this man who could talk and hold his tongue with absurd composure, who could put up with much, could strike and could refrain from striking—then it was he struck. And it was a well-aimed blow. But Anton lay by the wall for a moment only; then he sprang up, staring wildly at Willatz, and hissing: "Sausage-

machine!" Then he seized his stick and threw it; a flask fell from a shelf as the stick swung out. He looked round for something else to throw, but when he saw that he had already hit his mark—that he had been lucky enough to draw blood from his friend's face, he refrained from throwing an old-fashioned pistol he found in his hand. He threw down the pistol and said, trembling with rage:

"There, you see, I spare even a sausage-machine! Besides, you were hideous enough without the wound. I'm sorry about the flask; you deserve all you got. What did the flask cost?"

As he received no answer, he sneered contemptuously; yes, he snorted with scorn and utter disdain. *"Merde!"* he said, and went out.

He turned back to say: "The lady will be here soon! I suppose you have asked her to come and sew you up. For shame!"

Anton went along by the river again, in order not to meet Mariane, who was coming down the road. He was still quivering with excitement; the fellow had pluck, but he could not control himself and kept on muttering and hissing.

What should he do with himself till the mail-boat came? Bury himself in the hotel? For a moment he thought he might pass an hour or two with Theodore of Bua, but he gave that up and went to the hotel.

Nor would it have been altogether convenient if he had gone to the store just now; he would have found himself in the midst of a great confusion of cases and barrels, of unpacking and loud commands—Theodore was moving into his new emporium to-day. He had a large number of helpers, and Julius was among them.

Of course everyone thought the new store was ridiculously large; but Theodore's ideas were even larger: he foresaw already the day when he would have to enlarge even this new store! Nor could it be denied that he had received an enormous quantity of goods and needed a lot of room.

And the old store—the Misses Jensen's and the lawyer's

store? It was still standing there, wall to wall with the new one, it still existed—Theodore did not want to pull it down; the family might have it, he said. In the meantime, it was Theodore's too; he had his interest in it, his mortgage on it, as long as he was not paid off, so that there was good reason for him to leave the old store untouched. But things wouldn't go on like this for long! Why, the last commercial travellers had sold nothing to the Misses Jensen, but everything to Theodore! They went in and called on the ladies and left their cards with the greatest politeness, but further they could not go: they did their business with young Herr Jensen, their old customer; they made it a principle not to sell to two competitors in the same place. The Misses Jensen only nodded stiffly and tossed their heads as much as to say: "My dear sir, don't trouble about us, we will get all the goods we need, we buy for ready money!" The ladies had plenty of pluck. But they had not the art of trading at their fingers' ends like Theodore; they tossed their heads too much and did not make up for this by being good-natured. If one of the Segelfoss girls came to the Misses Jensen to look at linen for underwear, she was very likely to be told: "Even we don't use much finer material for our own underclothing, so this ought to be fine enough for you!" Theodore saw at once that that was going the wrong way to work; he had a much better plan, he introduced account-books for the steady girls who were in service. And then one girl would tell another that it was only yesterday that Theodore offered to let her have things booked and to pay by the month; "'for that's so much simpler, Fröken Palestina,' he said."

Theodore Jensen's store was a sight worth seeing when one entered it. It had big windows with large panes and light walls and glass cases with brass rods on the front of them. "How much do you think it has cost?" said Theodore. He had thought it all out himself, so that it might be the same as in other towns; it must be owned he had had some useful help from telegraph-superintendent Baardsen. This

queer idler and toper had come to take more and more interest in Theodore's activities—"for the sake of youth's good qualities," he said—and often gave him excellent advice. "Keep the brass rods bright!" said he. "If not, then get rid of the glass cases altogether!" Theodore remembered, too, that it was Baardsen who had arranged all the wonders of the eider-down fête, though this same Baardsen had not had clothes fit to wear to the party.

The eider-down fête!—people were still talking about it. "How much do you think it cost?" said Theodore. He named a sum—hundreds—masses of money. There was no fear of anyone's questioning the amount, for who knew the price of fireworks? "But you saw yourselves what I did with the sky!" said Theodore.

And yet, Theodore was not the same man since the day of the eider-down fête. If only the fête had never taken place! he may have thought more than once. Such bitterness as now took possession of him did him no good; it choked him and warped his mind—so that Theodore, who in reality was quite a different sort of fellow, sat down in solitude now and then and did the best he could: he swore hard. Anyone who knew human nature and was a judge of character might have been surprised at a clever lad showing so much pettiness and shallowness. What was he driving at? One does not give away costly pocket handkerchiefs at an eider-down fête; Baardsen would have dissuaded him from any such attempt—would have killed it with a smile. "What harm would it have done her?" Theodore repeated over and over to himself. He did not understand that one can say "Thank you" for a pin, but must refuse five and thirty crowns. No, he understood nothing but the shame of the rebuff.

Fare you well; that is my wish! he should have said, now as before, and let it rest. And time cannot fail to heal all wounds. Yes, there are so many things one ought to do and say.

In other ways too, the famous fête had not accomplished

all it was meant to; his colleague, Anton Coldevin, had gone away again without having become a familiar friend, and the *Segelfoss News* had not said a word about the fête. He had reasons enough for bitterness. And all this must be taken into consideration when judging of Theodore's treatment of his young sisters: he let them make all the small sales they could for several days, and then one day he came with the sheriff and attached all the cash—the very money with which the ladies and the lawyer were to buy goods.

"Such impudence!" said the sisters. The lawyer was fetched. "Let us talk the matter over!" said the lawyer. "The money in instalments, or the sheriff will take an inventory of everything and close the store!" said Theodore.

The kind-hearted sheriff stood looking sadly at them all, and was not at all anxious to proceed to execution and earn some money—no, he began to try and make terms: so and so, let each take a little; after all, both parties are of the same family——

"Kindred!" corrected Lawyer Rasch. "There's no question of what one understands by 'family.'"

"Daily expenses must be allowed off the takings," continued the sheriff; "but reasonable repayments made by instalments——"

Both parties were alike dissatisfied; Theodore said "No" straight out and the lawyer said the same. "This is an attempt to cripple the business," he declared. And to the sheriff he said bitterly: "You, Sheriff, come here with your 'reasonable repayments'; I've had enough of them: the Bank must have its dues within four and twenty hours. Do you hear?"

The sheriff did hear. And although he should not have stammered, because it was an unmanly thing for anyone to do who actually owned a marketable horse, and because it could not possibly make a good impression on a man like the lawyer—yet the sheriff only succeeded in stammering: "I'll see about it—I'm sure there must be a way—I have a horse——"

But humility had a good effect on Lawyer Rasch, now as once before; his wrath died down so far that he was able to say: "A horse? who will buy a horse and feed him now with winter drawing near? You should have sold it in spring."

"Yes. But there was all the spring work——"

"Yes, yes, yes; I've said my last word!"

But, after all, the sheriff was able to make some sort of terms between the two sides before he left, and got the parties to agree to a certain percentage of the takings going to Theodore in settlement of his claim. So far, so good. But it was only putting off the evil day—the store was doomed.

The sheriff made his way up to Herr Holmengraa's. He would probably have done so anyhow, but he had received a short letter from Fröken Mariane the day before, saying she wished to speak with him as soon as he came into these parts, and she did not wish to wait for ever!"

"Sheriff," said Mariane, going straight to the point—she looked happy, she was smiling—"Sheriff, I have had a letter; would you like to look at the envelope? What's written on it?

"'A thousand crowns.'"

"Yes. It came the day before yesterday. Now the thing is this: you're to have the money for twenty years. See, here's the note—a thousand-crown note; you're to borrow it from me for twenty years and give me back two thousand. Do you understand that, Sheriff?"

No, the sheriff did not understand it.

"The money is mine. You *might* read the letter that came with it—it's from a business-house; I have done a stroke of business, but it is a secret, you can't see the letter. And now I have said all there is to be said about this; when I saw you at the bottom of the hill, I practised what I was going to say so that I could use very few words. For I hate to talk much about it," said Mariane.

"I won't live twenty years," said the sheriff.

"Yes you will," answered Mariane.

The sheriff managed to mumble his thanks—that it undeniably—but such a great help, a sum——

At this moment her father sent for Mariane and saved her. This may have been arranged—Herr Holmengraa often entered into his daughter's fun. "I wonder what papa is going to worry me about again now," she said. "The crosspatch!" said she. She glided out of the door at once, turning to say: "Well, good-bye, Sheriff. Excuse my having to go. And come again soon, do you hear?"

The sheriff went down the hill with his wealth in his pocket, thinking many thoughts, making calculations which did not include the sale of the horse. One did not sell a horse like that—it was priceless. But he could not go to the lawyer with a thousand-crown note; anyone would know where it came from; it would betray him, compromise him; he went to Theodore of Bua and changed the note.

"Where have you been in this short time?" asked Theodore, astonished. It was all quite clear to his quick wits; but as he had no reason to discuss the kind acts of the Holmengraa family, he stopped short, saying only: "It's no business of mine. Change a thousand-crown note? With pleasure. Two, if you like!"

Theodore was in a good humour: "In the hour you have been gone, something has happened here," he said to the sheriff. "Father learnt how things stand and he's had another stroke. Unfortunately!" said Theodore. "I have sent for the doctor."

"Another stroke?"

"Unfortunately!" said Theodore. "And I'm expecting the lawyer in a very short time, to-day maybe; he'll have to come and beg for mercy and surrender. Where's he to turn to? He's blocked on every side! What! you don't think he'll come and surrender?"

"I only thought it wouldn't be like him."

"I'll see that it is like him!" declared Theodore. "What the devil—have such a lump of fat poke himself in and

start business alongside of me! There's something I want to ask you, Sheriff: must one have a licence to produce a play at the theatre? The actors write me that they are coming here again."

"Oh, there will be no trouble about that, I'm sure. So, they're coming back?"

"On the way south. They are to give another play this time, it's called 'Over the Garden Wall,' and is full of singing; they ask if I have got a piano. Of course, I've got a piano."

Theodore grew taller and taller—this last hour had evidently been growing weather for his fortunes: "Change a thousand-crown note? Two, with pleasure!" Piano? He had got a piano long ago and was in the mood to say they could have two. He was going to set to work at once now to mend the road out to the theatre, so that Fröken Sibyl Engel should not twist her ankle again. He was also going to send word to Nils the shoemaker that the poor fellow would be able to earn another two crowns. "Let Julius and the others have a dram of grape-brandy this evening when they finish work!" he called out through the office door to the assistant, Kornelius. What fire and energy, what activity and go! And it was a good and cheering thing for everybody that someone had fire and energy.

Did not Nils the shoemaker need something to cheer him? Very much, indeed! Good Fru Rasch had not forgotten him, and had often let him carry home a child's boot in a big parcel and come back with a broom. But, somehow, Nils did not seem to grow any fatter on this—at least not perceptibly so; on the contrary, the longer it went on, the more sadly and steadily did he waste away. Fru Rasch had got Young Willatz to write to Mr. Nelson in America, but no answer had come. "Perhaps Ulrik is on the way home already," said Nils. For a long time he had been waiting for the bazaar for the Segelfoss Welfare Society—he had prowled about on the watch for it like a dog—wished to God it might take place—but nothing came of

it. No, it was wrecked on the question of a hall. The lawyer could not bring himself to hire the theatre from Theodore—from this shop-mouse, this upstart; and, besides, it would not do to admit that it was a theatre he had, and not a boat-shed. "The Segelfoss Welfare Society is going to hire a boat-shed for its bazaar, my dear Nils!" "No, I can understand that!" said Nils the shoemaker, smiling wanly, as he agreed. But, this being so, there was nothing for him to earn.

The sheriff dropped in to see him again. He had gone first to the lawyer and paid his debt. "There, you see, it's worth while being firm!" said the lawyer. "Can you "pull through the audit too now, when it comes?"—"I hope to get through it now as heretofore," answered the sheriff.—"Oh, you're become very high and mighty!" said the lawyer, annoyed by the confident tone of his victim. "But then you should have squared accounts with me a little sooner."—"I shall do my best never to owe you anything again. That is my intention," answered the sheriff.

So, probably, he had at last realized that he must earn more and keep his accounts in order. It was none too soon. He looked very firm and determined when he left the lawyer, and he crossed over to the hotel to demand the auction money from Julius within four and twenty hours. But, when he got to the door, he saw by his watch that he couldn't possibly find time to go into the hotel to-day, so he set out for home and trotted up to Nils the shoemaker's. He would try once more to get the shoemaker to work. He was unsuccessful again.

"I'm not making shoes for myself even any more," answered Nils, showing the ready-made boots from the store which he had on his feet. These boots were one of the last things he had bought in the summer—bought with that wonderful, magic money. And now they had begun to give way a little in the seams and to get thin in the soles, but they were still light and comfortable summer boots—though it was autumn now—and Nils could go like the

wind in them. "There are plenty of boots like these at the store," said he to the sheriff.—"Yes, but those are not the boots for me, Nils."—"And in any case," said Nils, "I've just had word from Theodore that there's to be a play at the theatre again now, and there's no one else to look after the tickets and the entrance money."—"What do you get for such an evening of ticket-selling?" asked the sheriff.—"Two crowns," answered Nils unhesitatingly.

He must have been led away from home some foggy day and never found his way back again.

The sheriff met the doctor's gig and lifted his cap.

"Good day, Sheriff!" Doctor Muus returned his greeting as he pulled up. "And now I'll take the opportunity of saying good-bye at the same time—I'm leaving one of these days. Thank you, Sheriff, and will you remember me to your people at home? Well, I think everyone will agree I've done my duty and served out my time here in the north; let others do the same! I haven't been idle, at all events, and I'm making a professional visit now while my foot is on the ship's gangway, so to speak. It's to Per of Bua; old Jensen of Bua, a pitiable being, sick these many, many years. I have done all science can do—it is what we call hemiplegia, paralysis of one side of the body. Just to-day I've had word that he has had a fresh attack, but I must not give any opinion as to what it is until after a careful examination. It may very well be a case of cerebral paralysis. Well, good-bye, Sheriff! I can tell you I shall be pleased to go south again and get to Christiania and meet my own family. It is the anticipation of this moment that has sustained me up here all these years. Now, thank God, I shall take with me a wealth of experience which will benefit my own part of the country."

The doctor drove on, came to the store, went up to the attic-room, sniffed at the bad air, ordered a window to be opened, took his overcoat off, rubbed his hands and examined the patient. There was no mistake about Per of Bua's being sick; but, oh, no! he had not suffered from

any fresh stroke—that was something he would by no means allow. Something had given him a shock and he had roared loudly; as was to be expected, the misfortune to the store had hit him hard and for a moment clouded his brain—one does not give up a brilliant scheme of revenge without a wrench. However, Per of Bua was not lying at death's door. But he was terribly excited still. "The store!" he said. "And that goat-woman too!" said he.—"Yes, that's all right, and now I'll give you something to make you sleep!" said the doctor, to calm him. He weighed out very, very carefully a little bromide of potassium, just as if a grain too much spelt death. "And he's to have this to-night," he said to the Misses Jensen, who were standing round him; "and bring me a table-spoon that I may see the size," he said. "Yes, that will do. Now, I'll give him the first dose so that you'll know what to do to-night!"

When the doctor had done and came downstairs, Theodore was standing there waiting to hear his report.

"Well, there's no fresh paralysis," said the doctor, "but the patient must be kept quiet. Should a change for the worse take place, let me know at once."

And Doctor Muus went over to his gig, picking his steps with extraordinary care.

Theodore remained standing where he left him. His father's new affliction had bowed him down—had crushed him a little, no doubt; he was subdued when he went in, and he countermanded his order to Kornelius. "After all, it's not worth while giving the men a dram to-night," he said, "seeing that my father is worse."—"Is he dying?" asked Kornelius.—Theodore answered: "The patient must be kept quiet. But then," he said, "I've never heard of a patient who wasn't to be kept quiet."

Theodore was far from being in the same frame of mind as in the forenoon, and if it had not been for what people might think, he would, most likely, have wound up the gramophone and listened to the Coronation March for a

time. But his depression was not to last long; a message came from Lawyer Rasch. It was the girl Florina who brought it.

"Do you know where Didriksen is?" she asked, attending to her own affairs first.

"Didriksen? What do you want with him?"

"I wrote to him long ago and haven't got any answer. I only want to know where he is."

"Why? The money will be here when the time comes. I've told you so."

"Yes, but I don't want to wait. You can tell him that from me."

"Catch me doing that!"

Pause. Florina has not much shame in her: she says:

"Very well! Then I'll write to his sweetheart; I know her name."

"Now, you'd better stop, Florina, let me tell you that!" said Theodore solemnly. "If you say a word by mouth or letter to that lady, just you look out!"

"I don't care a fig for you!" said Florina, looking at him furiously.

But that was about the worst thing you could fling in Theodore of Bua's face—he could not stand it, it brought him down to the level of ordinary and unimportant people.

"I'll take and throw you out!" he cried, pale and angry. "And then you'd better take care never to come in here again."

Florina saw he was in earnest and said:

"I'm here on an errand from the lawyer. It was to ask you if you would go and see him at his office."

Theodore thought awhile.

"From the lawyer? Would I go and see him? No."

"That was the message."

"You can tell the blooming lawyer that if he wants me for anything, he can come here!"

The girl Florina made a somewhat scornful grimace at

the little man's haughty air—that was enough: Theodore seized her and led her out of the door.

"I'll give your message right enough!" she said, threateningly.

But the lawyer's business must have been important enough to make him wish to see Theodore that very same afternoon, for he came stumping into the shop, and began by saying that young men's politeness was not much to boast of nowadays. Theodore stood just in front of the counter with a half-metre measure in his hand, and a good half-metre measure such as he used is made of ash. He went a step nearer to the lawyer and asked if he wanted anything. "Yes," answered the lawyer, and then he said, without much beating about the bush, that the old store must surrender.

So soon? What in the world—! Ha! Theodore saw through the fat man at once: the lawyer most likely thought that his fees were in danger already—ah! but at that Theodore smiled knowingly; he knew the old shop better.

"There's nothing to smile about," said the lawyer, jingling his keys. "However, I'm not going to stand and discuss the matter with you here; can't we speak in private?"

"No," answered Theodore, "I want witnesses."

The lawyer's visage grew exceedingly grim at these words and he said:

"The youth of the present day have no manners. You sent me an impertinent message that I was to come to you to discuss matters—aren't you a little ashamed of yourself? If it weren't for the sake of your parents and your sisters, you might have waited for me long enough. I've nothing more to say to you, and we will have nothing more to do with you. After your father's turn for the worse to-day, I have advised him and your sisters to settle the matter with you direct. The settlement come to will be the final one, and whatever has to be put in writing I will draw up. In my opinion, it will be to the advantage of

you all to come to an amicable settlement. Of course, you will take over all the goods in the store?"

"Yes."

"And at a fair price. Of course you'll do that. And you'll buy the store itself, too."

"No," answered Theodore.

"You won't?"

"It's an old hovel. I have, as you see, my own house, and what do you think that has cost? No, you and the others have thrown me out of the old store; I'm not going back there again."

But this Theodore must have said on purpose to mislead only. Was it for nothing that he had built the new store wall to wall with the old one? Would he not turn the two houses into one in due course?

"But I can rent the old shop," said he.

At that the lawyer became thoroughly frightened, thinking of his fee, perhaps. "It's your relations only I'm thinking of," said he; "what is going to become of them? If they don't get a good price for their property, I don't see that they'll have anything to live on for the future."

"My relations! they could have left things as they were."

"I grant you," said the lawyer, "that as things have turned out, that would have been the best thing to do."

Oh! the overfed lawyer crushed—ground to atoms—the pot-belly, the pig! Theodore lorded it over him. He asked mercifully: "What would you want for the old shop if you had a chance of selling?"

"I have spoken to your people about that, and we thought—your father thought three thousand."

Oddly enough, the girl Florina had just brought young Didriksen to the light of day again—how would he have dealt with such a situation?

"I will give three thousand," said Theodore.

The lawyer looked upon this as a personal victory and said: "I see there's some use talking to you! It isn't

to no purpose that I've given you an impartial view of the whole position."

What! was he becoming his old self again, and was he beginning to jingle his keys!

"You haven't given me any sort of view," said Theodore, "and you can go about your business—the sooner, the better."

"Well," said the lawyer, taken aback. "Very well, it is best that you and your family should now treat further on the lines I have laid down. In the end there will have to be a statement of effects and assets—bills outstanding will be deducted, as well as my little fee; but there will still be something left—one part of which will go to your parents and the other part to your sisters. Do you adhere to your intention of giving up all claim on the inheritance?"

"Of course."

"Good; that's all I wanted to be clear about. When an inventory has been made of the goods, and the effects have been valued by you all, I will be at your service with my help. Do you agree to that?"

"Don't stand there jabbering any longer!" said Theodore. "I will give my family all that's due to it, and more besides, without your assistance."

V

ONE may wear gold buttons in one's waistcoat and yet not able to compose an opera. Willatz Holmsen was wearing gold waistcoat-buttons just now.

What was there he did not try! Had he stopped one day to count up all the things he had done to get himself going, he would have been surprised. He went walking and he locked himself in; he drank wine and he fasted; sought the society of men and shunned it; he worked by

day and he worked by night—and all that came of it was barren toil, mere empty drudgery. And to this desperate barrenness was added a terrible jealousy which gave him no rest.

"Dinner is ready!" said Pauline, gazing at him with her dark-blue eyes. "Thanks," he answered, without even turning his head. He was working. Of course he played well—he had learnt the piano from his earliest boyhood, and, besides, he was a Christmas-eve's child; but that did not help him now, it only wore him out. No, taking one thing with another, he ought not to have come back to Segelfoss this year either; everything had gone wrong from the beginning. Even his first reception he had perhaps in his heart of hearts expected to be somewhat different—he had looked for something in the way of a mild sensation, an interested crowd upon the quay; after all, he was well known in the country, a promising musician. What had happened? His parents' housekeeper met him upon the quay—dear Fru Kristine. Segelfoss had seen greater travellers than he—Englishmen who ransacked every corner of the globe; Prince Bonaparte on his way to Spitzbergen. Once the Prime Minister had come, had played his part, affected interest in the life and doings of the people, and been cheered on the quay by that climber, Lawyer Rasch. Willatz Holmsen arrived without causing the slightest stir. Over and over again he had thought of leaving, but he stayed. He stayed and was taking root.

Anton Coldevin had gone home long ago, of course. Up at Herr Holmengraa's everything went its even way. Mariane might be seen now and then going up to the mill with her father and down again. She wore a Turkey-red cloak. Perhaps Anton will come back to her again soon. Well, let him!

A dangerous and dreadful time! Willatz got clay and began to model—what did he not try! It is to be a winged figure, a figure-head for the bow of a ship, something very fine. It turned out that he had not lost the art of modelling

—not at all; he was even better at it to-day than in the days of his youth in England when he had learnt it. But figure-heads are decidedly difficult things to make. Willatz got out his painting-materials, his brushes and tubes—why not? His mother, too, had painted, and he had learnt from her. Then he played the piano again. Then he put the gold buttons into his waistcoat with his own hands and wore them in honour of himself and in memory of his father who had given them to him. At least it was a pleasure to wear the gold buttons down one's waistcoat, and Willatz wore them in his rooms at the tile-works; and he wore them, too, when he went to the forest to his timber-fellers.

Aslak and Konrad were felling trees there now, and when Willatz came near enough they touched their hats. It would have been as much as their place was worth if they had forgotten to! He did not say much to them, but he looked at their work with steady grey eyes and told them what he thought about it. God knows what these two fellers originally had in their minds when they took service with Willatz Holmsen; whether they wished to injure him, to take their revenge for something. But after they had worked for him for a time, they found that they liked his service; and when they had felled the timber in the forest, they stayed on longer and longer, constantly getting new jobs on the big estate. They no longer bought their food at the store when they had money to spare; no, they got good food and sleep and their washing done for them, they put on flesh and got into good condition.

Everyone has his own troubles. Willatz wore gold buttons and worked like a slave and grew thin with care and worry. I'm evidently only a mediocrity! he would think now and then, perhaps. He bore it well, bore it like a Holmsen. No, indeed, there was no getting away from it—mediocrity had taken root in him, had got into his blood; but Willatz did not murmur. Not a bit of it! Up at the farm he would pretend to be interested in the

animals, in the poultry; it would have been a sign of weakness to forget everything else for the sake of a piece of music. He often noticed the cock—that splendid fighter with a knife on each leg: see, now he has fallen in love, he treads his wings, sidles, poses awkwardly, stumbles and almost falls over—ah, what antics he plays! But then he becomes the master again, and struts like a god across the yard. What a fine fellow he is!—it is just as if he wore a flower in his buttonhole.

Willatz himself might have worn a flower, a rose or a carnation. He returned to his tile-works quarters and played and raged and toiled. Would the forces within him never burst their bonds? What was he filling his days with? Niminy-piminy stuff. Here and there a knife, never a sword; sounds without number, never a full-toned voice. Dilettantism. He went three times in succession and looked at himself in the glass to make quite sure of it: yes, he had a grey hair, a couple of grey hairs. His father had not gone grey at such an early age. Anton Coldevin was not grey. He was welcome to come back to her!

"Dinner is on the table!"—"Thanks, I'll be there in a little. No, I am not coming. Leave me alone."

What is this? It has failed him countless times—now it has come! The tide has caught him! It was night, but to his eyes it seemed to be sunrise, the sky began to be bathed in gold and the earth blushed red beneath it. The tide, the tide! Long enough have we waited, but now we must not complain—ah, no! nor feel our eyes grow moist, nor tremble! Ah, no, we must not——

It rises higher and higher, till his soul is filled to overflowing, and still it rises; he sits like a blind man drinking in melody from the dark without—writing it down by the light within. He writes, writes, writes. Now and again he strikes the piano with one hand, then writes again, moaning the while; a feeling of sickness seizes him, he spits, then writes again. So it goes on; hours pass; ah! these hours

when one is borne on the tide! Is it once again a canta, a song, dance music? No, it is the opera, the masterpiece! Now, as never before, the fires smouldering within him have burst into flame—perhaps it is well that jealousy has been seething within him for so long.

The tide ebbs gently in the morning hours; the lamps are burnt dry and he totters across the floor and blows them out. Then he falls on his face upon the sofa and sleeps, his head upon his arms.

"Good morning! Will you not come and have something to eat, sir?"—"No, thank you. Go home again; I will come later——"

His task is not finished. Thank God, not yet! A glance at the night's work and the tide surges anew through his soul—it begins again—sounds from an unknown realm of harmony, from some magic isle, sweep him away, engulf him—the tide rises again. His inspiration does not leave him all day, but tosses him about, unbridled, unstinted; his sickness increases, his tears flow, he casts himself upon the floor and writes in a state of esctasy; the tide rises higher and higher—it floods his soul with bliss——

"Please, won't you have a little food, sir?"—"Thanks, put it there——"

In a couple of days he surmounted all difficulties and saturated his work with the flowing tide. He lived alone, at an immense height above the earth, lived on his own resources, absorbed himself; sleeping now and then, eating unconsciously, swallowing all that was set before him: adrift and filled with a frenzy of poetry. All in a couple of days. Then the tide ebbed slowly.

From the uttermost barrenness and abasement, headlong into glory! Conception and fulfilment in one bound.

Young Willatz—his forefathers had had servants to help them on with their clothes of a morning—Young Willatz needed no help; he lay where he fell. And no one ever rested better than the artist who, after a successful day, falls asleep on his own arms.

"I am going away," he said. "But no one is to know of it except you and Martin."

Pauline, in any case, had no one to tell of it. She gazed at him with her sweet and anxious face, and a velvety softness filled her eyes: "Oh! are you going away again?"

He said to Martin that Aslak and Konrad were to be kept quarrying stones all winter. He was going to build something in the spring, an addition to the byre, a pavilion in the garden, a silo—great plans; was Young Willatz Holmsen then so rich?

Pauline saw him go on board. She stole a sip out of his glass of water. As she went out, she passed her hand gently over a peg on which he had been used to hang his hat. Then she locked up the rooms at the tile-works and went back to the Manor, to all the care of the house and the supervision of the maids and the selling of the milk from upwards of thirty cows. Little Pauline, who was such a capable housewife.

And Willatz swung out from the quay and did not look towards the shore; he was elegant and silent, and wore new gloves. He was leaving as quietly and as proudly as he had come—no excitement, no cheering. By a lucky chance, the actors were landing on their journey south—Lydia, the leading lady, and Fröken Sibyl and the actor Max and all the others were landing at Segelfoss again, and they attracted all the attention. "And the hairy paw and a flush of brandy on his jaw——"

Theodore received the company on the quay and escorted them to Larsen's Hotel. "There have been great changes since you were here last!" he said, and at once told them how he had become sole owner of the store and had bought the whole business. The actors listened with exaggerated attention and made a show of being interested in the welfare of the owner of the theatre. Fröken Sibyl Engel asked for particulars: "So now your sisters won't be at home any longer?"—"My sisters? No, they have gone back to their situations. And I myself," said Theodore,

"have been dining at the hotel for some weeks, but now I've gone back home again. For I own everything now." —"To think of your owning the whole thing!" exclaimed the young lady. But now Max, probably thinking she was going a little too far, said sarcastically: "Isn't it nearly time you twisted your ankle again, Sibyl?"—Fröken Clara, the pianiste, asked after Baardsen.

And where was Baardsen? Had he not wished to show himself on the quay before the smartly dressed travellers? Of course, he repaired the omission at once by going to the hotel and calling on Fröken Clara. Great pleasure at meeting again and warm expressions of friendship; sketches of travel in out-of-the-way Norway; experiences, amusing misadventures on steamers and in hotels; artistic triumphs in the towns. "Over the Garden Wall" was a delightful old play translated from the Swedish; they had improved it, to be sure, and added new songs—Max was a master at writing poems in verse. There was a painful undercurrent in "Over the Garden Wall"—the lovers never came together; no, she stabbed him, killed him, and it suited Fröken Clara just splendidly, for she had no use for a play where people got each other. She herself might have made a rich match and all the rest of it——

"Do you play in the piece?"

"Of course. I have the chief part. I not only play, but I sing too, and accompany myself on the guitar. The others can't do that, and so no one else has been given such extremely good notices—see, here they are, if you care to look through them! Aren't they good? And now, of course, we must have a success here at Segelfoss too—things went so splendidly here in the summer. Don't you think we shall, Herr Baardsen?"

Strange Baardsen, foolish Baardsen, what had he expected of Fröken Clara? Nothing, perhaps; but at least there had been something individual about her before; she had felt bitter; she had been resolved on giving up an art in which she could not become great—now her bitterness

had gone, she had laid it by, just because she had been given a part in an unknown vaudeville. Sing—could Fröken Clara sing?

"Oh, yes, it will be sure to go all right," he answered.

"Yes, for it must. What are we to do if it doesn't?" said Fröken Clara, laughing. "We have no more money. We made a good deal, but it was such a long way between the towns. And then we bought one or two things when we had the money—it got cold and we had to have warm coats. And besides, I had to have a negligée; would you like to see it? A dressing-gown, with thick silk cord round the waist——"

Baardsen said: "Willatz Holmsen has just left by the steamer. They say he has been composing night and day lately."

"Indeed," said Fröken Clara. "Well, I'm not interested in music any longer; I saw that it was no use to me. I am not interested in anything but the art of acting. See here, Herr Baardsen; of course what you said last summer about the art of acting was only a joke? You don't answer?"

"I don't remember. But it is not at all impossible that I may have joked last summer about the so-called art of acting."

"Good gracious, how horrid you are! Excuse my saying so!"

"Where are the others?" asked Baardsen.

"The others have gone to the theatre; Herr Jensen was to show them a gramophone and a piano. Do you wish to meet the others?"

Doesn't the pianiste want to try her piano?"

"No! What a question! But wait till I have put something more on and I'll go with you. Can I go in galoshes like these?"

"What's the matter with them?"

"They are not bright and new any longer; I must get some new ones. I assure you, people look at me in quite a different way since I got some fine clothes at Tromsö.

Do you know, Herr Baardsen, that hat of yours is disgraceful. Excuse my saying so."

Baardsen smiled: "If I had put on one of my new hats, I should not have dared to look my old one in the face again."

"Don't you wear an overcoat?" asked Fröken Clara.

"No."

"But surely a telegraph-superintendent should be decently dressed."

"Dear Fröken, even if one tried, one couldn't be as grand as the head-waiter in a big hotel."

"There are the others coming back again, surely," said Fröken Clara, taking her galoshes off again. But now the little lady must have begun to be afraid she had hurt the telegraphist; she went up to him and began to button his jacket while she chattered: "Goodness me, how fine and big you are; I only come up as far as this on you, look here! But I can't understand why you stick on here at Segelfoss! How long have you been here? Look, that's how your tie should be; now go and look at yourself in the glass! No, it can't have been the others who came, after all. But we won't go out—will we? Listen, Herr Baardsen, will you be just fearfully sweet to me? I noticed that you had a dagger once, the kind that slides back into the hilt when you strike with it—will you give it to me?"

"Yes, with pleasure."

"Thanks. Yes, you *are* the nicest man in the world! What do I want it for? Well, it's in the play; I strike him down, and it would be so nice to do it with all one's might. Oh! 'Over the Garden Wall' is a wonderfully deep play!"—Fröken Clara hummed, seized her guitar and began to sing. And when she stopped she said: "None of the others can do that! What do you think of it, Herr Baardsen?"

Silence.

"I have no doubt that you play better than you sing," answered Baardsen. "Nor do I doubt that you know it yourself. You are deceiving yourself."

"Oh! now you're horrid again! I won't have your dagger. Look here now, do I really sing so atrociously? Well, but *believe* that it's good, that it will pass—believe it, do you hear! Of course, I can't sing; but don't tell the others so, promise me that? For then the part would be taken from me again, and it's a magnificent part——"

Then the actors came at last and they were all so glad to see him again. And Fröken Sibyl was as interested in the telegraphist's welfare as she had been in Theodore's. "How are you? How nice it is to see you again!" The manager asked Baardsen about the prospects of the performance. And did he think there was a possibility of a first-rate performance being repeated here?

Baardsen was in a fix; no one knew the Segelfoss theatrical world less than he did. But, of course, the company was so well advertised now that the prospects might surely be said to be bright.

Fru Lydia, the leading lady, brought in her work-box, saying: "Excuse me, but I must mend a tear!" She opened the work-box and among the sewing-materials there came to light two ten-crown notes.—"Goodness me, how rich you are!" exclaimed the treasurer of the company. "It is a good thing we got to know it!"—"Would you like me to ask where you got all that money from, Lydia?" said Fröken Clara.—"Yes, do!" urged Max.—The leading lady gave Fröken Clara a disdainful glance and replied without a trace of embarrassment: "Wait till you earn my salary, my little friend, and you too will have a couple of ten-crown notes to spare!"—And then they all nodded at one another as if they knew this old trick Fru Lydia performed for the benefit of strangers. But Fröken Clara was not satisfied with nodding: she gave the leading lady to understand—yes, she shamelessly stuck a sheet of music under the leading lady's nose with the remark: "Look here, you don't even know the meaning of these simple little marks! for you haven't the ghost of a voice in you!"—"Don't fight, children!" said the manager.

Fröken Sibyl took no interest in the quarrel—it was quite a matter of indifference to her whether they quarrelled or not; she was much more concerned about herself. She was so clever at devising some new bit of finery, and liked to dress gaudily, and to paint her face; she had found two white sea-gull feathers on the road to the theatre and was arranging them in her hair.

The telegraphist left the hotel poorer than he came. He had hurried thither with some of the feelings of a youth, of a boy, still warmed a little by the afterglow of last summer's infatuation; but now he was no longer a hot-headed youth—what had become of that strange intoxicating state of feeling? And at once his brain began to work, to hit out all round, so to speak; to philosophize; and some of his thoughts took shape in lofty phrases such as this: "Miserable life, deep degradation!" and some in common language: "Pretty Clara, you play better than you sing, and you know it yourself—you sing like a keyhole. Would you like to know whether I have formed any definite opinion on the subject? No definite opinion, pretty Clara, but an opinion both about it and you and all of you—prove to me that it is wrong! You are and will always be mountebanks. Do you say that someone must be so? Well and good. Must it also be that some human beings are unsexed? Well and good. The trade you follow obliterates the distinction of sex between man and woman; you talk and act as if you were on the same footing, though you are not the same; it is all artificiality and error: there is a heaven-wide space between Capricorn and Capella. Fröken Sibyl is certainly sexless; actor Max is most likely a little of both sexes. He is a poor, useless creature in man's clothes. And what are you?

"Pretty Clara, you buttoned my shabby jacket and breathed on me; that meant nothing, but you were used to a man expecting to have some return for his amiability and you thought that I would want it as I did before. There was no refusal in any of your gestures, but where was the fire? Do you think it a sign of fire to place yourself on a

level with actor Max, and talk indecently and pretend to be immoral like him? You are mistaken—it is a sign of impotence. You are not fit for passion, you merely play at it. Pretty Clara, I have turned against you because you are incapable of love, I scorn you, your game is played out. When you walk on the street, it is not in order to get somewhere, but to turn out your toes prettily, to ask connoisseurs whether they are enough turned out; you boast a frivolity you don't possess, you bring disappointment to every true man. One should not expose passion in the market-place; passion is holy; the kiss and the embrace have no sort of connexion with the street.

"Why do people think you actors shameless? Because people are asses. You are not shameless; you tremble with shame at your impotence. When, as constantly happens, you have to feign erotic fervour, it is for 'art's' sake, for your own personal satisfaction, for the sake of the evening's performance. That is why you are ashamed, as it is right you should be. You ladies pretend to look down on domestic life, pretend to be indifferent to the scanty personal respect you enjoy; you are either not mothers at all, or very bad ones, either incapable of bringing up children or pitifully incompetent at it—every day of your lives you sink into deeper shame on account of this impotence. That is the truth. The actress is more ashamed than the people who are asses. Asses have their natural powers and are not ashamed.

"Pretty Clara, shall I make excuses for you? We'll toss our heads and say we don't need any—isn't that so? You have heard that that, too, is 'artistic,' that it is part of the game. Who were your father and mother? Are you players descended from people who have been driven out and gone to the bad? You are seldom good-looking and you quickly grow ugly; you patch all your bodily defects with strange devices in clothes which are afterwards copied by the rest of the community. Vulgar finery reigns and Venus is deposed. Venus? May the goddess forgive me for

naming her in this company! Was Venus a mountebank? Did she miss no opportunity for a smart sally from the boards if she could make a hit—for throwing some ribald jest to the theatre-mob? Did she perform tricks? She was holy.

"I excuse you, pretty Clara. You are in a travelling company which must live in cheap hotels and not outrun its means; which must pretend that it is doing a roaring business—that the prodigal distribution of free tickets is entirely the result of overflowing coffers; whose members must pose as well-to-do to everyone and in every shop: I would have taken that silk corset, but I don't like the colour! Put aside that musquash fur, the day after to-morrow is pay-day! A miserable life. . . .

"What more do you deserve? What have you learnt? A little from life, a little more book-learning perhaps, a little more 'education' maybe—the juggler at the fair can eat burning tow and throw daggers. You have come to the theatre from anywhere at all and with any qualification at all or none: talent, ambition or necessity. Talent? To show yourselves, to make a public exhibition of yourselves. That is a thing slaves have done since olden times, since the days of the Pharaohs and the Moguls; in our days a knack, just as common as book-learning and 'education'—in some towns and countries a disease which neither God nor devil can check.

"And so you have reached your goal—the house with the three walls. Now, can you realize, pretty Clara, what a sham that house is?

"On the stage foolish chatter and waving arms are the rule. But no well-bred human being chatters and waves his arms; he does so only in the moments when he has forgotten his good manners. What is best in you, you do not put into words; you have fine thoughts, but you are silent about them. If you hear the theatre-mob laugh, you may be sure you have cut a caper at which no one would laugh inside a house with four walls, but from which everyone would turn

their eyes away with embarrassment. Or go in front and sit, a *solitary* spectator of a fellow-mountebank's capers, and see if you laugh! It is the lights and the people and the music which make the theatre a gathering-place; this, and this only, is what makes the most banal pastime in the world a necessity for grown-up human beings—that they may sit and make a pretence before others of being thrilled; that they may outdo those that sit around them in appreciation of art.

"And do they understand art? What if their interpretation be entirely overruled? Here come the critics! Look at them as they come in; they are going to settle it, they are going to guide this assembled mob—to say whether Fröken Sibyl turned in the right way, and whether actor Max yawned in the right way. Afterwards these old men will sit and put theirs views on these problems in writing. And one will say 'Yes' and another 'No,' speaking from the depths of their expert knowledge.

"In the interval we go to the restaurant. We need refreshment, we have grown faint, it is exhausting. And now we stare and are stared at; mob bows to mob to-night as it did the last night; we look at clothes and listen to opinions; will the piece succeed or fail?

"Pharaoh and Mogul—you were tyrants from conviction; the theatre-mob is a tyrant from artlessness. He writes in the *Segelfoss News* and reads it himself with delight.

"The so-called art of acting is make-believe according to recipe. It is a hybrid form of art which has arisen not to perfect poetry but as a parasite on it. The mummers win their greatest triumphs in the productions of specialists who are born with certain knack, and they seek their justification in the fact that they put some substance into even the poorest of these productions: that is to say, they magnify and interpret what is not worth interpretation. The mummers might possibly find their mission in the farce: by making the mob weep instead of sitting and guffawing.

"Do you agree? Have you formed a definite opinion of

your own that my opinion is wrong? Let us hear, pretty Clara! . . ."

Fröken Clara might perhaps have answered that if he were the Baardsen, the son of the house of Baardsen, who had never been able to make good in any way, no answer was necessary. He had tried to act, but had no talent; he had written plays, and made a fiasco. Fröken Clara could go on acting undisturbed, and her company too.

Ah! but Segelfoss was no longer a focus of art, no longer a town for troupes to visit. What could possibly be the reason? The artists were the same as before, and "Over the Garden Wall" a delightful play. There were a few scattered spectators in Theodore's theatre; they talked loudly and scoffingly, and called to one another across the big hall to come and sit over here where there were empty benches to spare! And when the play was over, they said loudly that it was the worst rubbish they had ever seen, and left the theatre in a bad temper.

What was the meaning of it? They had advertised in the paper and the editor had written a puff; Theodore of Bua had hoisted flags both at the store and at the theatre. Nils the shoemaker had been punctually in his place to sell tickets. And the company themselves had done their part: The gentlemen had been out showing themselves off with their hats cocked on one side, and the ladies with new cloaks. But in vain! Was it that Segelfoss was not equal to two theatrical performances in one year? Or was it that the play itself was not very suitable? It ended sadly; the hero was a fine man in every respect, but was stabbed to death by his sweetheart, owing to a misunderstanding; and at that the Segelfoss youths howled and wanted to take his part. No Lawyer Rasch or Doctor Muus was sitting here this time to keep them in order; it did not help matters that the sweetheart grieved magnificently afterwards and sang with tears running down her cheeks—the boys felt they had been cheated, they hadn't paid to see a man get the worst of it.

Next day Baardsen came to the hotel and found the

company depressed; Max alone showed a certain amount of cheerfulness, but that was out of bravado.

"We'll have a little celebration!" said Baardsen.

The responsible members of the company smiled sadly at this suggestion, but the irresponsible received it with great applause. And when Baardsen went out and came back with wine for the ladies and whisky for the gentlemen, it was not long before all felt a little less responsible. "If only the celebration could last till the steamer comes and takes us away from this horrible place!" said the manager. "But the ship is not due until to-morrow evening," said the treasurer.

Hours passed, jolly hours; Baardsen, the angel of mercy, himself fetched more brandy, and, no doubt, it came from that fellow, Theodore of Bua, for his firm could do anything now. The treasurer burst out with: "If only we had money to pay for all this!" "It wouldn't do any good if we had!" answered one of the others. "We shouldn't pay our shot in any case!" But the manager was by way of being sensible and said: "Let us behave so that we can come back to Segelfoss!" "No, we'll never come here again!" cried some. "Yes, we'll come here to see Baardsen again!" cried others. "Hurrah for Baardsen!" they cried.

Baardsen steadily and firmly pursued his rôle of benefactor; he was like a father with his children, like providence. As he set the fresh bottle on the table, he said: "We'll fill up the place with these; I'll protect you from the draughts with brandy-bottles!" Oh, that jolly devil, Baardsen! he couldn't have been gayer if his head had been decorated with mussel-shells and baboon-manes.

Of course, no one could feel sad any longer. Fru Lydia remembered that she had heartburn and fetched her drops; Fröken Sibyl went for her tonic just as unceremoniously; friendliness was the order of the day; they threw kisses up to Pastor Lassen on the wall and drank his health; they drank with one another and forgave one another all sorts of affronts.

Baardsen went and sat down by Fröken Clara as if he meant never to leave her again, as if at last he had a chance for a real meeting with her. This irritated actor Max and made him mad with jealousy. Max, you see, was abnormal; the least thing upset him, and he was as jealous of everyone as a eunuch; he now said straight out that the telegraphist would have to look out for his head if he didn't move! Fröken Clara shrieked: "Go away, Max! I can't bear your disgusting blue hands on me!"—"You say that?" asked Max, threateningly.—"We all do!" answered Fru Lydia and Fröken Sibyl. Max got up pale as death and went out.

In short, everything was done on a liberal scale and well carried out. Baardsen called for food for the company, and when they had eaten they drank again. There was no holding Baardsen. He used such strange and high-flown expressions and astonished Fröken Clara by saying so many sweet and tender things to her: "My mouth hungers for yours," he said; "I have to bite my lips to hold it in! How is it with you, Fröken Clara? If love does not grow greater, it grows less. That is the law!"

Then a letter was brought in—written with pen and ink—from Max. He asked if he might join the company again. Baardsen took up his pencil and was going to reply.—"No, not in pencil," said Fröken Sibyl; "Max is so very particular."—"If lead pencil is not good enough, how about an indelible pencil?"—"An indelible pencil, first-rate, ha, ha, ha!" laughed the treasurer. "And say that if he comes, we will try to put up with him."—"No, not that," said Fröken Sibyl; "that won't keep him away."—"I thought Herr Max was so particular?" said Baardsen.—"Say that I'm not here any longer," said Fröken Clara.—"Do you think it's you he wants?" cried both the other ladies, and began to fight over the pithless fellow.

Then Max appeared in person at the door, bowing, and asking if he had their permission to enter. "Certainly!"

they all answered.—"Yes, but you, Clara, hunted me out of the room just now."—"Did I speak to you?" answered Clara. "Not a word. There are many others besides you, Max. Sit down. Have you had anything to eat?"

But now things were getting a bit too lively and it was getting late too. Fru Lydia and Fröken Sibyl laughingly took each other's medicine and each said it did her more good than her own. Then once more the manager was by way of being sensible and said: "Behave so that we may come back here again, I beg of you!" And it was then Fru Lydia was taken ill. At first she had thought of fainting, but she changed her mind and said she felt sick and ran out of the room.

The others were left behind; Baardsen in an exalted and happy mood. He spoke of taking possession of Fröken Clara like a costly piece of velvet or embroidery; he spoke of her looking at him with a look which consumed him—ah! This grew to be too much for poor Max again, and he gnashed his teeth at them.

Fröken Clara happened to think of the dagger, the magic weapon. "Don't forget the dagger to-morrow, Herr Baardsen!"—"I won't forget it!"

The manager wished to break up: "Let us thank the telegraph-superintendent for this unforgettable hour; thanks and hurrah!"

"I'm not going yet," said Baardsen.

Max groaned with jealousy and asked: "Did you not hear the manager ask you to go?"

But Baardsen sat there firm, big and immovable. He seemed to be expecting some great event to take place—seemed to be hoping for the outburst of some mild sort of orgy.

Max rolled his eyes in perplexity and, addressing Baardsen directly, said: "There are seven of us sitting here, you are only one; can't you give us some advice as to how we can get rid of you?"

Baardsen sat still.

"Come and let's go for a walk!" said Fröken Clara to him.

Baardsen rose at once and went with her. . . .

Thus the night ended and a new day dawned; a miserable day with headaches and many cares. The seriousness of things asserted itself; the manager and the treasurer talked responsibly together. A blight had fallen on the company; they were stuck fast at Segelfoss; they had arrived empty-handed and had nothing to fall back upon. Ah! those new overcoats which had cost so much! If they could only settle their account here, they might perhaps get free deck-passages on the steamer as far as the next theatre.

The manager and the treasurer formed themselves into a deputation to the leading lady and, with many apologies, begged for her two ten-crown notes.—"Not a bit of it!" answered the leading lady.—They waited awhile and went to her again.—"What am I to pay my own things with?" asked the leading lady. "And why are you so extravagant when you have money?" she asked. "I saw you buy five crowns' worth of postage stamps."—"I have to write to a number of places and enclose newspaper cuttings and put on stamps," answered the manager. "But I still have two crowns' worth, and I am counting those in."—The leading lady relented. "Here are the notes!" said she. "Can we pull through now?"—"Not quite. But we'll see whether the others haven't a little!"

And the two men went away on a fresh deputation.

What the manager aimed at was that the troupe should pay their way at each place so as to be able to return another time. A miserable life. The actors, simple-minded and helpless, talked a childish language; they were like hens scratching about together. It was easy to take advantage of them and lead them to ruin; there was no difficulty in filling them with drink and making them lose their balance;

but when they were on their feet, they could make quite a good showing against their dark background. Now and again they sat and patched clothes, darned holes, sewed up their torn shoes with needle and thread. Fröken Sibyl wished to do all she could to help the troupe; after consultation with Fröken Clara, she began to wash and hang out to dry in a conspicuous place fine collars and petticoats with drawn-work, so that people might get an impression of the grandeur of these travelling artists. When the deputation came to Fröken Clara, she merely opened the front of her dress and pulled out a battered medallion on a cord, and she apparently thought proudly that this would pay the reckoning, that the cord alone was worth more than any king's chain. "Money I have none," she said, "but I have this!" And with that she handed over the medallion. Perhaps she had got it some Christmas-eve at home—a Christmas-eve long past.

Telegraph-superintendent Baardsen came bringing the dagger and gave everyone a friendly greeting. He was just as burly and strong to-day as yesterday, and unburdened by cares; he had got rid of them already, no doubt. Fröken Clara thanked him for the dagger, but was not in the humour to learn the way to use it. "We are in a hole," said she; "we can't pay our shot!"—"That's nothing," answered Baardsen.—She explained the position; there was a deficit, it was serious; Baardsen smiled and said: "Why, you can borrow these few shillings from me!"—She clapped her hands together and exclaimed: "Bless my soul! you're the most delightful man in the world—I never heard anything like this! "Lydia!" she shouted out through the door. "Do you know what? Baardsen is going to save us, the telegraph-superintendent——"

Baardsen fetched some notes and started another jollification—he could not have seemed greater if he had been crowned with laurel. The ladies kissed him and the gentlemen nodded their heads and declared that they would be

grateful to him for this as long as they lived, and that his generosity should be bruited abroad wherever they went. There were a great many notes, quantities, and Fröken Clara's spirits rose so that she ran for the dagger and wanted now to learn how to use it.—"Is it this way?" Baardsen took it in his hand, pressed a spring in the hilt and gave it back with the words: "Now then, strike me down!"

Fröken Clara struck——

The next moment brought blood, dumb stupefaction, shouts—again shouts, shrieks and excitements, lamentations——

Had Baardsen himself adjusted the dagger so that it stabbed? Or had he made a mistake and not opened the spring properly? He himself looked bewildered when the ungodly weapon was drawn out—it had stuck fast in the cartilage—and then he sank upon a chair.

Shouts and excitement continued. Julius came. "The doctor!" he said. "But there's no doctor here until the steamer arrives; Muus has gone!"—"Help me down to the station!" said Baardsen. He turned rather pale, but he had the presence of mind to hold his clenched fist firmly against the wound. "It was my fault!" Fröken Clara wailed incessantly. Baardsen answered her, smiling: "Be quiet, child, it was my own fault! I wanted it to happen."

It was a sad day. It is true that it was freezing outside and so Baardsen got ice for his wound, but the troupe were sincerely horrified at the accident. Baardsen said: "It might have killed me, but I'm not bleeding internally; it is only a stab, I'll cure it with lysol!"—But Fröken Clara was inconsolable and upbraided herself for having struck so hard.—"The mistake was that you didn't aim better," answered Baardsen; "strike a little more to the side next time!"—"How can you joke about it!"—"I'm not joking."—"What! Did you really wish me to kill you?" asked the actress.—"Yes," said Baardsen.—"But why? I can't

understand the whole thing."—"I wished to die by your hand."

The whole company heard this and the ladies, Lydia and Sibyl, were afraid that the sick man's mind was beginning to wander.

It was indeed a sad day.

But towards evening Fröken Clara put on her cloak and galoshes and went out. She had been silent for a couple of hours, as if she were turning something over in her little head, and now she went to the office of the *Segelfoss News*. The editor was there setting up his paper. She asked him to telegraph to the papers about the catastrophe, the tragedy, and the editor had no objection to being the first to give his colleagues the news, as the lady herself was going to pay for the telegrams. "If Baardsen were not unhappily lying on his back with a gaping wound, he would have done it himself," said Fröken Clara. "An unhappy love-affair," said she. "And I suppose we shall have to mention my name—it can't be helped, and besides it won't do him any harm. It was certainly an attempt at suicide. And say it was done with a dagger. And say that I was quite blameless, for God knows I was, and write that there is hope of his recovery——"

But Fröken Clara did not send the telegrams from Segelfoss—not from Baardsen's own station, for some reason—probably because she had not time; she took the telegrams with her by steamer to the next telegraph station. But all the same she went up to see Baardsen one last time before she left, to inquire how he was, and as she was as down-hearted as ever, the sick man jested with her again, saying: "Poor thing! when one has murdered a man during the day, one is not fit for much at night. But you can leave me without anxiety, Fröken: I shall recover all right, worse luck."

And Fröken Clara was very pleased and much cheered by this joke. She was by no means a hard-hearted creature.

VI

WHAT—has Larsen's Hotel got a flag? It is not brand-new, but it makes a brave show; it is one of Theodore of Bua's flags, and Lars Manuelsen has borrowed it. It is flying in honor of his son, Lassen. This is a great day!

No, no action had been taken against Lars Manuelsen for his theft in the autumn, but the magpie pursued him along the roads screeching, and people were almost ill-mannered enough to scream too. But perhaps the worst thing of all was the article in the *Segelfoss News;* it even caught Pastor Lassen's eye, and straightway brought back to it its original peasant expression of fear and cowardice. His father was so plainly pointed to that he could not possibly be mistaken; this was a nice thing—a father like this might easily ruin the career of a prodigy son! The pastor would have to trail the long way from the capital up to the Nordland and try to straighten the matter out.

He came. He was big and bony, long-haired, beardless, and solemn. He was warmly clad. He landed and met his father, shook hands, pointed to his baggage, saw Julius, shooks hands with him too, and again said that that was his baggage standing there. Then he went to the hotel with his father; Julius followed close at their heels. The pastor was bothered by one of his galoshes, which kept slipping off at the heel; but the other stuck to him faithfully, like a dog.

He came into the house and met his mother: "Good day, Mother! And peace be on this house!"—His mother was so deeply moved that she could not get out a word, but just wept for joy. Ah! this poor old woman, good in her own way, had lived a miserable life with a scoundrel for a husband and with bad children—and now she has got

her famous son home again. It is a great moment! Her heart is full of adoration and her old eyes of dotage—she felt as she had two generations before when she had been given a brass button.

"Well, you can see here how a plain man lives," said Julius. And, no doubt, he expected rather more of an answer from his brother than what he got—a mere nod. It was evident that the brother was not in a good humour, not very graciously inclined; for even before his mother could bring in the coffee he said: "What is this I hear about you? I have read the *Segelfoss News*. And *you*, Julius, you ought to know better!"

"What's up?" asked Julius.

"That you serve travellers openly with stolen eatables," said his elder brother, who knew what he was talking about.

"Oh, well, Father's responsible for that," said Julius coolly.

"Father!—it's a nice thing to throw the blame on your father!"

The wag in Julius was aroused; there was always something genuine about his impudence—he gave his tongue free rein and put no petty restraints upon it: "I said to Father at once: 'You shouldn't have done that, you who have a son like the great L. Lassen.' Ask Father if it isn't true."

"Oh, I'm getting old now," Lars Manuelsen answered his children; "my only thought now is that you who are better than me should get on. Haven't you any coffee for Lassen?"

The old mother awoke from her state of adoration and went out in a great flurry.

"This is a most unpleasant business for me in every way," said the pastor. "And now I've had to leave my studies and my work and travel this long way north. There's no sense in it."

"Is it true that you have become a doctor?" asked Julius, to turn the conversation away from the wretched affair.

"What about my baggage?" asked the pastor. "Is anyone bringing it?"

"I'll go and fetch it at once," said his father, hurrying out of the room with a certain amount of relief.

The pastor fixed his eye-glass on his brother and asked:

"Do you let your old father bring the baggage over here?"

Julius began to laugh, but not with mirth. "You seem a little thick-headed now and then," he said.

"I?"

"You've a pennyworth of wit to a dollar's worth of foolishness. Yes, I'll swear you have."

Their mother came in with the coffee: "Now I wonder if you'll care for our coffee the way we make it now."

"Yes, thanks, Mother. And of course you, Mother, have nothing to do with this sinful affair of the robbery," said her son. "But you, Julius, can have no possible excuse."

"It's the magpie!" said the good mother, trying to smooth matters over. "I've always said it. 'You shouldn't meddle with the magpie, Lars,' I said, 'for she'll be revenged on us all.' But your father tore down her nest and found the storehouse key, and that was the beginning of all the trouble."

"Do you fly a flag on the hotel every day?" asked the pastor.

"Flag? I haven't even got a flag," answered Julius.

"Your father is flying it for you," answered his mother. "He went himself to the store and borrowed the flag."

"He needn't have done that," said the pastor.

He drank his coffee. His father came with the baggage. Julius said: "If you want to wash yourself as other travellers do, you can come with me!" The pastor went with him. They had to go up some steep stairs; the pastor said: "These are very steep stairs!" Nor was the room to his liking; a pig of a commercial traveller had spat over the wall from where he lay in his bed. "That was that fellow Enersen," said Julius, "for he was drunk one morning!"—Their father followed with a portmanteau in each hand; he said: "Your mother will wash it off."—"Dear me,

have you come after us with the baggage, Father, while you, Julius, are empty-handed!" said the pastor.—Julius was no longer on his good behaviour—quite the contrary; Pauline, at the Manor, had refused him the evening before for the last time, and now here was this superior brother, who probably didn't even mean to pay for his board. "Why didn't you take and carry the luggage yourself?" said he.—"Julius, Julius!" cried his father reprovingly.—"What has Lars ever sent you?" asked Julius angrily. "A wig and a book of sermons!"—The pastor overlooked the rudeness of this remark and answered: "All I have earned, I have needed for my education. That has made me the man I am."—"Well, is it true that you are a doctor?" asked Julius again. "But I suppose that's all lies?"—His brother replied: "It is a matter you don't understand about. I am doctor, but I'm not a medical man. I have taken a doctor's degree in my branch of learning. Look here, can't I have fresh water in the carafe? It's half full of stale water. And, while I think of it, has the bed a spring mattress?"—"Yes, it has," answered Julius. And he suddenly spat on to the stove, saying: "However, you can do just as you like about sleeping in that bed. But I may tell you that finer people than you have lived here, and people with a jolly sight more notes in their pocket too. And Theodore of Bua came here for his meals for a long time when he had no one at home, and he's fine enough, I should think, and has more money than both you and I——"

The pastor again passed over this great rudeness; he washed himself—washed his hands and face, but not his neck or his ears; took up a brush and brushed himself; changed his collar and cuffs, and made himself look clean. Then he sat down and turned his thoughts to his own career, and what a wonderful career it had been: common fisherman, priest, scholar, Knight of St. Olaf, doctor of philosophy, prospective bishop, spoken of as a possible court chaplain—if there should be need of one—yes, and as a possible Minister of State if there should be a vacancy—in truth,

God's ways are inscrutable! But here he is now come to rescue a thieving father who has written begging for help. Of course, the pastor could not do much more than show himself and support his father by his prestige. He won't go to-day, but to-morrow he'll go to Herr Holmengraa and to the office of the newspaper. To-day he will eat and rest. He takes his gown out of his portmanteau and hangs it on the wall—the gown has the badge of St. Olaf's order on it, in case it may be needed.

Behold the lad Lars! a strong will, indomitable perseverance: these great qualities are his.

He has hands—what are they for? They are made for use, for toil; big-boned, grotesquely developed and fit for something out of the common; but, from want of use, they are pale and sickly-looking, most illogical hands, for he has not turned them to any account throughout his life. His ambition has had no lofty aim; it has been satisfied with officialdom; it has been his wish to take part in the administration, the management of what others have brought into being. He has reached his goal and he does not doubt that it is worth all his efforts. He has put away learning in his head in the same way as his forefathers put away coppers at the bottom of a box, and now he knows a great deal, he is learned. He has not wit enough to be bored by this wretched life; he has steadily striven after more book-learning, always a little more; then his object would be attained. This was his errand in the world. And now he sits here with flabby muscles and a brain worn out by the drudgery of school and college; but he is a man of note, you can ask him questions about many things and he can answer you—he has read about these things and knows where they are to be found, he can repeat his knowledge like a parrot. His thesis for his doctor's degree dealt with some Norwegian clericals of the sixteenth century and was compiled from Danish magazines, Norwegian state-archives and *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*—also from Norwegian magazines, he would have added if he had heard this enumeration, for

he is nothing if not accurate. His next work was a treatise on the great Nomen Nescio, containing many discoveries important to scholars; among others, that it was not in the year 1512, but in 1513, that the hero passed away, "to seek a better hereafter," and, moreover, that two years before his departure on the above errand he was engaged in a lawsuit with a member of the Hamburg Town Council—his fourteenth lawsuit, and one hitherto undiscovered by investigators. This work was a complete triumph for the lad Lars, and as he had been long a member of the Philosophical Society, he had to be made a Knight of the Order of St. Olaf—he was somebody now. Ah! now he could smile at the thought of how, in his seminary days, a big silver chain had dangled from his watch—the badge of the knightly order was what he dangled in front of him now; where was his like? Was such a man to be a pastor in the Nordland! was he even to be reminded that he belonged to that part of the country! His outlook had widened gradually; higher and higher honours, more and more important offices had come within the range of his ambition; he had begun to complain mildly of neglect, of injustice; the papers did not mention his name often enough; the State did not do its duty. This had gone on for some years.

Then all at once—fate is most capricious in these matters—all at once his merits had begun to be recognized more as they deserved; he had received votes as candidate for a bishopric; contributors to the papers had mentioned him as a possible Secretary of State for Ecclesiastical Affairs. Was there his like anywhere now?

And now it was only a matter of time, nothing more; he had only to wait. The lad Lars had grown bolder; had thought he would like to show that he had liberal views; had taken up the modes of thought popular in the seventies; had begun to associate with the advocates of *maal* [1]

[1] Translator's note: Maal (pronounced as English "mole") = literally, speech; an attempted fusion of certain Norwegian dialects into a national language.

and had made himself very agreeable. He could well afford to do this, he was such a famous man and, as a common fisherman, it suited his personal inclinations too—he had been born in squalor, and he worked amid dust. No scholar troubled about personal cleanliness and clothes—Heraclitus himself was not refined.

So everything had gone as it should with the lad Lars. He was able to look forward with reasonable hope to the next death among the bishops; in the meantime he went on with his studies and was becoming ever more versed in book-learning, in documents on vellum and parchments. Time went on; his democratic sympathies became proverbial; he heard that one ought to collect antiquities, and he became a connoisseur of church furniture, of wood-carvings, of pewter tankards, of silver mugs. His culture was many-sided, including as it did both popular and scientific knowledge.

Then had come this business about his father: was it really to turn out a serious matter?

When his mother came to call him to dinner, he got up from his chair with a look which seemed to say—food? Oh, yes, of course, but it is not the one thing needful. The rogue! the thing was he had had an extra beefsteak just before he landed, and so he wasn't hungry! And in the dining-room he was just as superior to worldly concerns and said: "Oh, yes, the food is good enough, Mother; let me have another plate of soup!" When he had dined and said grace—good heavens, what a sight it was!—like some huge Great Dane which had been trained to sit and put its paws together—when he had finished saying grace, he asked that his father and Julius should be called in.

They came.

"What guarantee have I that what I have been eating wasn't stolen food?" asked the pastor.

His father and mother were dumb with amazement. Julius answered: "Then you shouldn't have eaten it!"

But the pastor had evidently no intention of letting the

two sinners off with the mild reproof he had given them a while before; they were his near relations, but they were a thief and a receiver of stolen goods; the fullest justice must be done.

"With you, Julius, I will not bandy words," said the pastor, "but this I will tell you—though you may elude earthly punishment, you will not escape that of heaven."

The poor old mother laid her head on one side and folded her hands; Julius showed no respect—he asked what he had been called in for.

"But you, Father, must reflect!" said the pastor. "God will not allow Himself to be made a mockery of," he said; "it may soon be too late to repent, no one knows the day and the hour——"

Julius spoilt it all by saying: "People are asking if you are going to preach in the church. Are you?"

His big brother stopped; Julius could not have thought of anything better to shut him up with. Lars was expecting and hoping for a request that he should preach; it was for that reason he had brought his gown and his order with him. This, of course, was the main weapon he intended to use against public gossip—the sight in the pulpit of a preacher whose name was known up and down the land.

"Who asks whether I am going to preach?"

"Lots of people. Numbers have been talking about it."

"We'll come to that later," said the pastor. "At present I am speaking of the sinful and unseemly doings of which you two are accused and which have even got into the papers."

"It's the magpie's revenge!" whispered his mother, nodding frantically as she gazed at each in turn.

Said the father to his son: "I am an old and ignorant man in all that has to do with books and such things; but I would like to know whether you think it a good thing to have a magpie's nest about a place, or whether it is a low, unseemly thing. Just be quiet and you'll hear!" he said to the others.

"Don't touch the magpie! don't touch the magpie!" the old mother admonished them.

"And if you are going to preach," said Julius, "I'll just mention it to Ole Johan, and he'll soon run round with the news."

The lecture was completely spoiled. But the pastor was very dogged and persistent. "In any case, this article in the paper has dragged me from my work and my studies and brought me right up here to the North," said he.

"You needn't have bothered to come," said Julius. "There's not a creature here that cares a rap about the whole thing any more."

"Then you shouldn't have sent me such an urgent call, Father. It was unwarrantable," said the pastor. But he was unspeakably relieved to hear that the article in the paper was forgotten.

His father excused himself by saying that it was Daverdana who had written so thoughtlessly. No, it was just as Julius said; no one cared any more about the thing. "But the magpie screams after me," said Lars Manuelsen, "and if you can do anything—if you'll exorcize the magpie——"

The pastor shook his head.

"Well, if you can't—— But there was another thing I wanted to ask you about; the freemasons have a ring the like of which isn't to be found among men; and now it's said that Holmengraa has got one——"

The pastor knew his father—he knew the sinner was now trying to save himself by talk. There was nothing to be done with him, and now if he wasn't going on to talk about Theodore of Bua's blasphemous signs in the heavens! —"Yes, isn't what I say true?"

The pastor turned to his brother and said: "I hadn't any special intention of preaching here, I must say. But if there is really a strong desire to hear me, then it will be my duty to preach. But in that case the request must come

from the pastor and the vestrymen. I will not go and ask them."

"No—o!" said his mother, smiling. "A likely thing, indeed!"

The next day Pastor Lassen paid a visit to Herr Holmengraa. He had more than one object in doing so; he had once in a leisure hour sent Fröken Holmengraa a little letter—"Dear Fröken Mariane, my former pupil!"—and now he wished to get the answer to it. He was rather a different man now from the one who had given her lessons; she was not what one could call an exceptionally beautiful young lady, nor was she so very well educated and well-read, but she could scarcely have avoided hearing what kind of a man Lassen had become. Now he was here. Strange to say, he was not so very much afraid of Fröken Mariane; it was another question whether her father, the enormously wealthy Herr Holmengraa, would be satisfied with him, for neither was the mill-owner, of course, a really well educated and well-read man who understood the value of scholarship. But Mariane, his former pupil—her, if you please, he intended to treat somewhat in the manner of an instructor, in a somewhat fatherly manner: he would talk of books and antiquities, of the soapstone baptismal-font covered with scroll-work which he had acquired in Sæterdal. It would be all right; before now, in boarding-houses, he had aroused an interest in more than one unmarried lady, and now he was going to present himself before his former pupil. Yes, and then he would hint, delicately suggest—the position was that he had been very successful in life, but he was alone. Books are not the only things, Mariane—come and see my library the next time you visit the capital, several thousand volumes already, and it is growing, growing. But, as I said, it is not good for man to be alone—and what is your answer to my humble letter?

He had only come to-day to assure himself of Mariane's delight; to-morrow he would speak to her mighty father.

But Mariane was away, away travelling. Then that was not her innocent whispering and laughter he heard in the study.—"No," said Fru Irgens, "Fröken Mariane is away travelling."

Herr Holmengraa came in. He let Lassen stand for a little, while they looked at one another. Then Lassen suddenly introduced himself, laughing as if he had been struck by a most amusing idea. "I can quite understand your not knowing me again," he said; "Lassen, your former tutor."—"Is that learned and famous man on his travels?" said Herr Holmengraa.—"Yes, I am on a tour up north and wished to have a look at old scenes."—"You're going still further north?"—"To Finmark. I am on a journey of research. In connexion with Læstadianism." [1]

"Won't you sit down?" Herr Holmengraa said at last, pointing to a chair.

"I have come on a very regrettable errand," said the pastor. He had made an unfortunate opening—he felt that himself—he was not expressing himself well, but he succeeded in explaining matters in a measure, and was greatly surprised when he heard that Herr Holmengraa knew nothing about the theft, nothing whatever, had never heard of it, and, in any case, paid no attention to gossip.—"But it was in the *Segelfoss News,*" said the pastor.—"Indeed," said Herr Holmengraa. "I don't read the paper."

This was splendid, prodigious! Nor, when he got to the office of the *Segelfoss News,* did the editor and compositor—Kopperud—appear to know anything of the theft. "No, it must be a mistake," he said; "if we had a small paragraph about such a thing at any time, it wasn't written by me, at all events."

This was glorious!

"However, we have a short article about you, sir, in our next number," said the editor. "Would you like to see the proof?"

[1] Translator's note: A pietistic (Methodistic) sect in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The pastor read it. So, at home here at Segelfoss too, they had seen him mentioned as a future Secretary of State! "Who wrote this?" he asked. The editor answered: "I really ought not to say; but to a man of your standing—it was Solicitor Rasch."

This happy idea of making Pastor Lassen Secretary of State had done more for him than almost anything else, even in Segelfoss, even with the climber, Lawyer Rasch. The pastor glanced with apparent carelessness over the extremely servile notice the slip of which he held in his hand, but he was glad at heart. "The famous divine has arrived at Segelfoss," it ran, "and has put up at Larsen's Hotel."

"You can add that I am on a scientific journey to Finmark," he said to the editor. "And the article mentions that my library contains from one to two thousand volumes—it is really nearer three thousand volumes, and constantly growing larger. Be so good as to correct that!"

Yes, to be sure, all had turned out gloriously. There's only the magpie left! he thought with a smile. He had not the heart to lecture his relatives any more; he went back to the hotel and was amiable to them all. His father asked: "What did Holmengraa say?" "What did he say? He wasn't unfriendly to me, you may be sure." "No, I'd just like to see him try it!" said Lars Manuelsen, threateningly. "For then I would ask him what he wanted with Daverdana."

His son did not, or would not, hear; he was quiet and gentle. Some of the Segelfoss children stood with their noses flattened against the window and Lars Manuelsen shooed them away. "Let them stay," said Pastor Lassen. "Perhaps later in life these little ones will remember having seen me with their own eyes!"

"Yes, yes!" said his mother, wagging her head, quite overcome.

A day or two afterwards, he received from the pastor of the parish a request that he would preach—it would have been more fitting had Pastor Landmarck come himself instead of sending a vestryman, thought Pastor Lassen—

and also a request that he would pay the sick Per of Bua a visit. Per of Bua? he thought, no doubt; I tried in vain to influence him once before, but I must not now refuse on that score.

Per of Bua was clearly near his end. He was no longer only "done for," he had begun to die in earnest. But death was not welcome; he would not have anything to say to it; ah, he had a rooted dislike to dying! He still lay in bed with his waistcoat on, although it gave out a ten-years-old smell; he could still swear the roof off, but his eyes did not take part in his oaths and were no longer fierce and filled with venom, but glassy and dull. But die? His mind was so far affected that he fancied he could taste earth in the water already although it was still early in the winter—and there shot through him a positive gleam of hope that it would soon be spring and that he might then get up and begin some regular work again! Ah! but death was breaking him up methodically, and steadily sapping what was still sound in him; he was dark round the eyes, and the rest of his face was grey.

"Won't you have the pastor before you die?" asked his wife.

"Goat!" answered her husband.

This "before you die," to a sick man, was impertinent and abominable, and Per of Bua refused the pastor, though, as a matter of fact, he was rather curious to see him for once. Now it was true that if anyone had the knack of making Per of Bua perverse and difficult to deal with, it was his wife; she had a special capacity for rousing his anger and at the same time seeming to have done nothing wrong. At the same time, her husband ought to have been thankful that she came up to him now and again and dried him as quickly as possible under the nose when he had been crying, for he was like a child and could not help himself with his hands except when he was desperate. And he ought, really, to have appreciated the fact that she ventured in to him at all, for it was not quite a safe thing to do even

now. "Goat!" was a coarse expression in the circumstances.

"And who is to have your clothes?" she asked. "You have both good wadmal clothes and a duffel jacket; who is to have them?"

"You!" answered Per of Bua, in a rage. "And much good may they do you!"

He was by no means lifeless, and as it was really an injustice that he should be dying, he did what he could to delay his last moment. He lay there, a grotesque object, ugly as a prehistoric monster, all in a heap, as if he had just come out of a huge egg—he lay and wondered whether he could not get up. Since District-doctor Muus's last visit, he had been much taken up with the question whether fresh air would do him harm. Goodness knows! As he drifted rapidly back to brutishness, he had accustomed himself to breathe stenches with delight—now he thought he would open the door and leave it open for a while. He managed, with great difficulty, to push the door open with his stick. He lay and tried the effect for an hour, but he did not get better. Supposing he went further? He became a gourmand in fresh air and his sensuality took such eccentric forms that he wanted to open the window, even to open the door of the stove to make a draught. He stood up. Of course he fell down. Yes, to be sure, he no doubt thinks, it was unwise to stand on two legs when one of them is dead! He got back into bed again by lifting first one end of himself and then the other; he was a like a stone moving itself with a crow-bar; and, once in bed again, he dragged his paralysed limbs in after him and left them lying all mixed up without arranging them in their proper places.

And now Per of Bua really must give in; but no, he wouldn't retire from life with any trace of dignity, but went out backwards, fighting each step. Watchful and obstinate, he tried to think out some way of holding on—something must be done, he could not lie there and submit tamely. It became a struggle with the inevitable, with unseen powers, if such there be. With dogged determination

he wrestled there, in his bed, with death, determined to win, to get the upper hand; he fought, he clutched his dead hand with his living one, and shook it, shrieking that he would teach it! He took hold of his paralysed leg, beat it hard and threw it out of the bed. But death is an exhausting companion, he takes one's strength away; Per of Bua could do no more—he had to collect his limbs again. "Where have you been?" he asked, howling with grief and rage. But before he forgave them for having left him, he demanded, gnashing his teeth, that they should come to life. Then they might stay with him, he said.

It was the hysteria of a stone.

Now he had refused to see the pastor just to spite his wife. But when he heard that Lassen—Lars of the cottage, that son of Lars Manuelsen—that Lassen had arrived, he hit upon the idea of asking him for help. It would be a chance to play a trick, too; he would get a pastor and yet not have his wife's pastor—he would cheat her, the goat! And when Lassen came, Per of Bua behaved well and was quite meek for a time, saying he wished to be prepared. The pastor answered him kindly—in fact, in order to make himself quite plain to this soul in deadly need, the pastor had recourse to *maal* and expressed himself in it as well as he could manage. This was a great success; Per of Bua became more lively, he laughed affably, it was amusing to hear such queer words, he said. But they must be more serious now, for he wished to be prepared, he said.

This idea of "being prepared" had taken possession of him; he no doubt connected it somehow with getting better —bread and wine, the sacrament, was a miracle after all; perhaps they would cure him! And when he heard that the pastor could not give him bread and wine this time, as he was on a journey of research to Finmark, Per of Bua was somewhat disappointed. "But I can talk with you and prepare you for the sacrament," said Lassen, "and then the pastor of the parish will admit you to the Lord's table!"— It was easy to see that this displeased Per of Bua, for in

that way he would not get the better of his wife; but it was of course not unpleasing to Pastor Lassen to be preferred to another man, and so he wished to do his utmost for this soul.

"Is there any special trouble you have on your mind, my friend?" asked Lassen.

"No. I have read a little in the psalm-book. I don't want the others to see it, but here I have it in the bed. And besides, I have thought about God now and then. But I don't pray."

"You don't pray?"

"No, I thought I wouldn't yet. Is that wrong?"

So Per of Bua was not sure whether he had handled God with sufficient care. He had dealt in panes of glass, and tumblers and coffee-cups; but perhaps God needs more careful handling.

"If only I had been able to get hold of my books in Christiania, I could have lent you a 'Guide to Prayer,'" said the pastor.

"Yes, I suppose you have a great many books?"

"Oh, thousands, a whole library full from floor to ceiling! And I would have lent you one."

Per of Bua went on counting up the few good things he had done: he had wanted to shut up the dancing-hall; he had wanted to fill it with matches for the Old Gentleman. That would have made it hot enough for the Old Gentleman!

The pastor smiled.

"Was that wrong too?"

"It was what I should call a whim or a naïve fancy on your part, my good Per. It was neither good nor bad."

"Oh, wasn't it?" Then Per of Bua came to think of the swans: they screamed so horribly, they frightened him, they were infernal birds, ugh! but he had never cursed them.

The pastor began to consider whether he ought not to make a judicious use of the sick man's terror, but gave

up the idea. "Swans, God's beautiful white birds!" he said. "Brorson has written his lovely swan-songs about them!"—But, after all, nothing came of it—no confession, no profession of faith, no repentance. A dying man who took credit to himself for not having cursed swans! Pastor Lassen looked at his watch and said: "What is it that is weighing on your mind, Per, since you sent for me?"

"I wish to be prepared."

The pastor shook his head: "I cannot prepare you properly for the Lord's Supper just now, I can see that. Not in the frame of mind you are in. You must first of all repent your great sins——"

"Oh, as to *great* sins——" answered Per modestly.

"You distress me, you alarm me," said the pastor; "I am really afraid for you. When you die, where do you think you'll go to? What will you do?"

"Yes," said Per of Bua, half to himself. But here he was, lying in his bed, and probably he had not thought out how he would behave in such dangerous contingencies. "No," he added afterwards.

"There you see!" said Lassen. "You are wavering and at a loss what to do; you have not even made up your mind that you are a great sinner."

Well, the truth must out, Per of Bua probably thought. What in particular had he on his mind? He had kept quiet about it so far: he wanted to get well again so as to get up and take the store back from Theodore. He wanted nothing else. The store was his.

"I thought you would take pity on me and prepare me; that perhaps it might help," he said. "I lie here year after year, in torture, my hands and feet getting worse and worse, and God is punishing me beyond measure with the heavy cross He has laid upon me, and He'll destroy me utterly before He makes me well again."

"Stop! You're blaspheming God, Per! God is not punishing you more than your sins deserve, be sure of that!"

"Well," said Per of Bua, "but you don't know what has

been going on here," said he. "I'm lying here homeless; Theodore has taken the roof from over my head though it's my own house. He has made an extra fine job of it. Turned his father and mother out among strangers, so to say, and I can't get well again so as to get about and put things right!"—Per has all at once found his tongue, and his eyes have regained something of their old hardness. "And can't you, at least, go down into the store and chase him out?" he asked.

"No. That is a matter for the temporal authorities. No. no, don't talk to me about such things!"

"I'm saying it for his own sake, because he's my son and my child. And if you could get him turned out, it's just possible he might begin to reflect seriously about what he has done, the hardened rascal——"

The pastor was silent. He recognized all at once old Per of Bua the peasant, the race to which he himself belonged. So it was for *this* a dying man had sent for him! He was silent. A few short years before, he himself had not been a stranger to such thoughts as Per of Bua was now thinking; thank God, he was now a new man!

"And it's not enough that he throws us, his parents, in want and misery upon the parish, but he robs his sisters of their share of the property and turns them out naked into the world," continued Per. "He has let the parish take the wine-licence from us now—everything is going to the dogs, and his mother is like a goat and does not look after the paraffin-cask or the treacle-barrel in the cellar. Where am I to turn? Theodore has built a new shop close to my wall, and now I hear that he has sawed through the wall and made one big store of the whole. If only I had been there!"

"Can't Lawyer Rasch help you about this? I can't interfere," said Pastor Lassen at last, getting up. Had such unbounded malice and thirst for revenge ever been seen in a paralysed man?—Truly, Lassen was glad that he no longer

belonged to a class capable of such wickedness and brutality! "Good-bye," he said shortly. "And repent!"

Per of Bua scowled at him. Oh, if he had only been as he was in his younger days when he had the use of his limbs! He was at their mercy now.

"I see what it is," he said; "you've settled with Theodore that I'm not to be prepared and not to get about again."

"I have not spoken to Theodore," answered the pastor.

"And repent, Per; that's my counsel as your spiritual adviser. What were you thinking about? Was I to stand here and give you absolution from God while you are in your present frame of mind? I couldn't do it."

"No, no," said Per of Bua, and his teeth weren't even good enough now to take a bite out of Lassen's leg.

When he got home to the hotel, Pastor Lassen said his visit to the sick man had not been pleasant. "It might have been a great hour, ah, yes! after confession and repentance, the palsied man might have felt his sufferings eased and his soul might have been filled with peace—holy peace; but unfortunately——"

On Sunday he preached, in full canonicals and wearing his order. The church was filled to overflowing. The sermon was quite unique. Though he was a scholar and a great expert in spiritual matters, he gave no sign of vainglory: he showed himself the humble servant of the church, the bride of Jesus Christ. And he said in so many words: "This that you hear, dear brethren, is the sound of *my* voice only; think, then, what will be the voice of God when He speaks from the burning bush!" All the same, it was a cheerful and simple sermon—a part of it was in *maal,* but the rest was quite intelligible. All the people from the parsonage were there except the pastor. Lawyer Rasch was there.

Pastor Lassen seemed to be full of terse and pithy sayings, whether he made them up himself as he went along or had read them in a family magazine. Six of these sayings ran as follows: Trust in oneself is usually better than trust in

others; but all should trust God.—There are clouds on the clearest sky, if there be spots on the spyglass.—Do good for good's sake without troubling about what may come of it.—Goodness is a rock in the ocean; good nature is a shifting sand-bank.—Nothing can melt hearts of stone, but God's mills can grind them down.—Talent without self-discipline is a palace without a roof.

After the sermon Fru Landmarck and her daughters came to the hotel and thanked him. It had been a great experience! Lassen asked after the pastor of the parish. "He was detained," answered his wife, "but he asked me to present his compliments." "Papa is so taken up with other things," said one Fröken Landmarck, giggling. "He was sitting studying a design for a threshing-machine," said her sister, giggling. Both the young ladies were shown the knight's cross of the order of St. Olaf and were allowed to hold it in their hands. The pastor's wife and Lassen agreed that one must live in the south.

"Welcome back to Christiania!" he said. "You ladies must not fail to visit me and see my library and my antiquities."

VII

THEN Pastor Lassen set out again; he continued his journey to the north to study Læstadianism at the fountain-head. He was doubtless sincerely glad to get away from the home of his childhood, this Segelfoss in the Nordland; he himself realized that he was out of place among such people as Lars Manuelsen, Julius Larsen and Per of Bua, and he would never return. "Farewell, Mother!" he said. "No, don't cry, I'm better off in Christiania!" said he.

Julius received no payment from his brother, and he made no secret of the said brother having gone off, into the bar-

gain, with a couple of books he had in the hotel and which he would not have parted with for a couple of crowns apiece. "I won't have the law on him," said Julius, "but I have no opinion of him—less than none!"

The fact was that Julius could not understand a brother who had become so great, and his sister, Daverdana, was not much better. "So, Lars didn't ask for me?" she said; "he didn't mention me? Well, I don't care!" said Daverdana. For she was married and had her own home, and earned extra money by sewing sacks for the mill; she was red-haired and much sought after, besides.

Then came the day when there was no more sewing of sacks for the mill by anyone. It could not be put off, could not be postponed, could not be avoided any longer; alas!

Fröken Mariane overtook her father on the road, and she was wearing her red cloak trimmed with fur. She said to him: "I came after you to show myself off."

Her father smiled. "What a pretty hat you've got!"

"Do you think so? But it's dear."

"Yes, I suppose it is. But it's big and pretty."

"Is the mill not working to-day?" she asks.

"No—as it happens," answers her father, "I had to put Bertel of Sagvika and Ole Johan on to other work."

"I see they're digging up on the hill; is it to be a well or a cellar?"

"It's to be a diamond-mine," answered her father, with the same mysterious air he had put on so often before. "Little Mariane, you may just as well go home again and not look at that hole."

"Do you remember when Felix and I were little how you used to carry us across just this bit of road?" she said. "It was always so muddy here."

"Yes. It doesn't seem many years ago. And now you and Felix will soon be able to carry me across."

"Time flies!" said Mariane.

"Time flies, little wiseacre!" answered her father, smiling. . . .

Martin comes towards them; he had begun to shoot again, and is coming from the forest with birds on his shoulder.

"I'm taking these birds up to your place, Herr Holmengraa," he says, touching his hat.

"Did Willatz Holmsen tell you to?"

"Yes."

"Thank him when you write," said Mariane.

And now Martin asks—for he has known Holmengraa so long that he can venture to do so: "Isn't Lars Manuelsen to be locked up for his theft?"

Mariane does not answer, but Herr Holmengraa does: "What do you think the Lieutenant would have done?"

"Well," Martin has to reply, "the Lieutenant would have let the thief go because he was beneath his notice."

"There you see!" said Herr Holmengraa. . . .

Mariane was very thoughtful as she walked homewards. Her wiles had not been successful; she had not got her father to open his heart although she had tried to. Nor had she succeeded in getting him to make any protest against her hat; he would not betray himself in any way. Ah! and it was neither a new nor a dear hat; it was a two-year-old hat, which she had altered herself. It was a trick; she wanted to force her father to show some little sign of disapproval. But no. And she herself had other things to think of besides hats.

When she got home, the sheriff from Ura was sitting there, and he asked casually for her father.

"What is it, Sheriff?"

"Oh, nothing, Fröken Mariane, nothing at all. I only wanted a word with him, as I was in these parts . . ."

In the next few days some odd strangers came to Segelfoss—men from town who were not commercial travellers; they put up at the hotel and sent for Herr Holmengraa that they might talk with him down there. Lawyer Rasch was there too—fat as ever; the sheriff of Ura was there too, but he seemed all the time anxious to get away again. The

gentlemen transacted their business behind locked doors.

The mill continued to stand idle and Herr Holmengraa gave out as a reason that he needed the two foreman for other special work. There they were—Bertel of Sagvika and Ole Johan—digging a mysterious hole which was to be a cellar or a cave, fire-proof and ensured with wonderful care against burglary or collapse; it was lined inside with thick masonry.

"What do you think he is going to store up here?" asked Ole Johan, the inquisitive. "For they say he has nothing more to store up."

"Who says that?"

"I heard it. They were saying it at the shop."

Bertel of Sagvika is always on his master's side, he always has been faithful—he was born with this unusual weakness; he answers: "He has probably just a little more to put by than the people at the store know of."

"They say that some big men from the south have come up here and are writing down every scrap and morsel Holmengraa owns," says Ole Johan.

"Your mother had a son that wrote things down," answers Bertel, in his stock phrase.

Yes, no doubt they had a suspicion at the store; the lad, Theodore, had a nose, a very keen scent, and he did not see that he had any reason for shielding the house of Holmengraa from suspicion any longer: Fröken Mariane had been so hard-hearted and scornful towards him; perhaps she would deign now to see him on the surface of the earth.

Perhaps. But it would not do for Theodore of Bua to be too sure of that. Mariane went about every day as usual in her red cloak and big hat. And this new thing that was happening? It did not seem to be any surprise to her; perhaps she had divined her father's position—she was cunning and clever; she might have chanced on letters and telegrams. And why had she tried to press on her engagement to Willatz Holmsen last summer, if not to forestall the crash, the catastrophe?

But one thing seemed to confuse Fröken Mariane's ideas: Baardsen, the telegraph-superintendent, who had just been dismissed from his post, and so had more time than before to knock about the roads—this Baardsen often met her and her father when they were out, and Baardsen saluted the mill-owner every time as if he were a King. What was the reason of this? If any man knew her father's position and had read his telegrams to and from Felix in Mexico, surely it was Baardsen. He bowed deeply and respectfully to the mill-owner, as he had always done. Wasn't her father ruined, then? Mariane may have thought. Or did Baardsen consider him worthy of respect and honour even after his fall?

She got hold of her old friend, the sheriff of Ura, again, and said: "Why did you say there was nothing the matter when there was so much? "I did not know it then," the sheriff replied. "I had received a telegram, but I did not understand it."

Then he told her all about it.

Aye! Holmengraa was totally ruined, he was on the rocks; the gambler had staked his last penny and lost. Such was this Herr Holmengraa who had come to Segelfoss carrying his own fate and that of others in his hands. He was a shape from the unknown, from the deep; he was a King—he had made his life what all life is, a riddle.

He did not whine, he did not talk. Formerly, when he had suffered a loss or received a blow, he would get as drunk as an owl and grumble; now he bore himself in a more dignified way—he dug a marvelous cellar which could be filled with something; he even smiled and was as affable as if he could lie down now and sleep for four days on end and be rich and at ease again. The wonderful man! But Lawyer Rasch noticed with astonishment that, at the very first meeting with the strangers from town, the mill-owner slipped his mystic ring—the freemason ring—from his finger and hid it in his pocket. Why? One of the strange gentlemen had a freemason ring on his

finger too, but he did not slip it off. Did the mill-owner not wish to make a parade of his high grade now that he had fallen? Or was he, perhaps, not a freemason at all? Lawyer Rasch had his doubts.

Yes, and Lawyer Rasch had his doubts also about a certain telegram from Puerto Rico, from a certain Felix, about the sale of a certain ship for an enormous sum. Was that, too, a fabrication? When one came to think of it, reflected Lawyer Rasch, what better could one expect from a man of his origin and with his want of culture!

But what was the meaning of the whole thing? Was not Herr Holmengraa a man of destiny? and what was the reason of his fall? He knew, and he alone. Perhaps his wealth had never been so very great, but he came home and made a show with what he had. That was both his weakness and his strength. He shone so brilliantly, so extravagantly, that he had to begin to borrow on his properties, even on the mill, and eventually on the wharf, the quay, his own house; yes, he borrowed on one thing after another, borrowed on everything, made use of everything, even to the machinery, even to the tools. He had been bankrupt for many years, but he had staved off ruin; it was an achievement that showed most extraordinary capacity, even genius. Of course, he might have wound up his business before it was too late, but then his creditors would have fallen upon him instantly; he would, perhaps, have saved a great part of his fortune, but there would have been no romance left in the thing. The daily running of a mill and its workmen—ridiculously petty. He did not love regularity, work gave him no satisfaction; if he could not shine, he would do nothing. He shone!

And could such a man settle down at Segelfoss and drag out a meaningless existence year after year at this place till age came upon him? Why not? Man bears his own fate and others' in his hands. The man from the Cordilleras had found out, no doubt, that he could afford to do so much and no more; he curbed his soaring ambitions and

flew along the surface of the earth. And, after all, Segelfoss was no insignificant place when he came there first; the gentlefolk at the Manor were living then—people towards whom it was worth one's while to play the rich man; he had not regretted any dealings with them, any presents to them—they, the Lieutenant and his wife, had been aristocrats and nobles. In reality all had been over for Herr Holmengraa when they died; the game was over—there is nothing romantic about shining down a vista of commonplace; a Lawyer Rasch, in a red-checked waistcoat, can do that. But by that time Herr Holmengraa had this mill which ground flour; he must go on grinding; the mill became his master; he ground himself to destruction; he ground till he grew old, till his back was bent and his eyes were dulled. It was fate. And, what is more, he had to fight to maintain his position as mill-owner, he had to use artifices and tricks, mystic finger-rings, mysterious telegrams, all to prevent the mill from coming to a standstill and ending his slavery. What else did he try to do? Nothing. His zigzaggings in the vista of commonplace, his sudden aberrations—when he had bouts of drinking and ran after girls—were the outcome of repressed natural instincts; the sailor was the man. But these were not his work: his work was to grind flour.

And with what incredible subtlety this man's brain could work—by hints, by veiled suggestions! Mountain-pasturage for two thousand sheep!—it sounded so arrogant and lordly, and yet it was all a deep-laid scheme: Herr Holmengraa wanted to buy this moorland because it was not to be had! The scheme was connected with little Mariane and with Willatz Holmsen, with a union which it was desirable to hasten. Later on, after the crash, Willatz Holmsen was to understand that for the time being two great ventures in the Pacific had gone wrong.

The mill had stopped working, the days passed; Bertel of Sagvika and Ole Johan were digging the hole and lining it with masonry. The papers must have been informed by telegraph of what was happening; they all spoke about it

openly—everything was known to the whole country round. By the last post Fröken Mariane had received another ardent letter from Anton Coldevin; to-day she received a telegram from him stating that the last voyage of the *Golden Bird* had turned out badly and he dared no longer hold his respectful offer open! The practical man was withdrawing, and who could blame him? Mariane's Indian eyes lit up with something like a smile as she read it. But she did not smile over a letter she received from Theodore of Bua; it was a little presumptuous, but artless and without malice: "Highly honoured Fröken! If I may venture to call at your house and have an interview, I am respectfully at your service in connexion with your father's affairs. Looking forward to the pleasure of your reply, Yours very respectfully, Theodore Jensen."—"Dear Theodore, you cannot prevent the inevitable," she wrote in reply; "but thanks for your very kind note! Yours, Mariane Holmengraa."

Then the *Segelfoss News* appeared; it had a leader on Herr Holmengraa's ruin, written with confidence and assurance on information "from the best sources." "We have long been aware of this, but we did not wish to betray any secrets," wrote the paper. "Nemesis has at last overtaken a business which was rotten at its foundations and could, therefore, only be maintained by constantly raising the price of flour!" The article was very long; a masterpiece of culture and style, and everyone knew that there was only one man in Segelfoss who had such commands of words. "We shudder to think of the workers who have to face the winter without food," this man wrote, "and we cannot refrain from hoping that the mill may be kept going even at a temporary loss. We understand that an appeal has been made, from a quarter which has the welfare of Segelfoss at heart, to the real owners of the mill to continue the business, and if the new proprietors do not realize the necessity for this, they will certainly be brought to do so. The workers are numerous and their demand is just."

Another article in the paper was probably the work

of the editor and compositor—Kopperud—himself; it showed no culture, but was quite acceptable to Segelfoss and the neighbourhood all the same. "What is the intention?" he wrote. "According to the practice the mill-owner, Holmengraa, introduced at his jubilee, the work-people have now been toiling for several years in expectation of a new jubilee, and are they to be disappointed of this? At the last, the mill-owner gave five thousand crowns, and now, as the time of the next jubilee is drawing near, he is breaking up his home here. This looks as if it were done on purpose, and it is the workers who are being defrauded again. Take note of this, wage-slaves!"

And the wage-slaves took note of this and much more; they now had free play, free speech—freedom. All could attack the King; the *Segelfoss News* did not bestow a single word of pity on him—the work-people denounced him with many words. "What did he come here for in the first place? Ostensibly for his poor health, to breathe the air of the pine forest. As if there weren't pine forests in Mexico! As if Segelfoss were the only place in the world where there were pine forests! What did he want here!—As long as he could satisfy the proletariate's strong and blind craving for food, all was well—he was to give the people flour—wheat-flour for choice; at a cheap price—gratis for choice; dissatisfaction began as soon as he began to repay himself, as soon as he wanted work for wages. They did not blame him for having corrupted the place with his adventurer's spirit, with his immoderation—people's mouths were always open for more, still more. The King had introduced ready money; money had sunk lower and lower in value; had rattled in everyone's pocket, and the King had scattered it with a lavish hand—this King whom everyone blessed! But ideas had become distorted, a new spirit had entered the homes of the people; the King had introduced a superfluity which the average man had neither wit nor character to make a proper use of.

And now it had come to an end. What did it mean?

Could it mean that tinned foods, watch-chains and cigarettes would be unobtainable? It was becoming more and more impossible for workmen to live; the capitalists were making away with the capital and taking the bread out of the workers' mouths. "We shudder to think of the winter!" Many had bitter complaints to make—they had bought horses to do the carting for the mill; they had no use for them any more. What were they to do? They were no longer used to hard work, they trembled at the thought of putting their shoulders to the wheel again; so they preferred to drift, to hang about the counter at the store, to discuss the questions of the *maal* and Lawyers Rasch's election prospects.

Couldn't Theodore buy the horses? Yes, in exchange for goods. Theodore bought and sold everything; the horses became his; he sent one in one direction and one in another by the steamers. Theodore was the man who had to step into the breach and help everyone—the store did not starve anyone; one can live some time on a horse. And on in the New Year there would be the Lofoten fishing and in summer one would manage somehow or other. But curse that Holmengraa!

"You mustn't say that!" said Theodore suddenly.

"Why not?"

"No. For it is Holmengraa who has made a town of Segelfoss, and that's what neither you nor the Lawyer have done!"—So, you see, Theodore had changed sides and gone over to the enemy in these last few days. He had had a letter from Fröken Holmengraa, he said, and after that he saw everything in a different light. Ah! this letter, these two lines: "Dear Theodore," "Yours, Mariane Holmengraa"—that was all the lad, Theodore, needed to make him change sides. He did not hope to win her—she was far too high above him for that; but he had not been turned away with scorn this time; his self-esteem was restored—she had written to him. He read the letter a hundred times, took it to his own room and kissed it, played the gramophone to it, made farewell speeches and wept. Such was

the lad, Theodore—no better, no worse. Of course, he boasted about the letter—he would have been a fool if he hadn't; yes, Theodore let it be understood that he, and he alone, knew all about Herr Holmengraa's fall. "There are some secrets you don't know," he said to Lars Manuelsen.

"I don't want to know them either."

"His cellar will soon be finished; valuables and treasures may find their way there yet!"

"Then he ought to remember to make up to Daverdana for her wrongs with a little something," said Lars Manuelsen, thinking of the family interests.

Was there any truth in the story that Herr Holmengraa was going to bury treasure? People were in doubt—who knew all the King's affairs? He himself was going about still, neither talking nor complaining; the mill was at a standstill, but the cellar had become more and more fireproof and safe, and now it was finished.

"What next?"

The sheriff of Ura came to Herr Holmengraa's house almost daily, and paid them friendly visits; perhaps, too, he was there to look after the interests of the creditors and keep an eye on the estate. He was a great comfort and, strange to say, Fröken Mariane and he had their jokes together as of old even in the midst of the family troubles. The old sheriff's accounts were square now and he owed no man anything; besides, he was looking after everyone's interests—he had just received a telegram from Willatz Holmsen.

"I had a telegram to-day saying that Willatz Holmsen is coming back," said the sheriff, casually.

"Who's coming?" asked Mariane.

And she was so amazingly clever that she kept her seat and just went on talking. "Look here, Sheriff, if it turns out that we are poor, then I suppose no one will want me any more. But perhaps Pastor Lassen would have me? and perhaps, too, Theodore of Bua would have me! But

if he won't, then Lassen will, I dare say; what do you think?"

"He's coming," said the sheriff; Young Willatz is on the way."

"Indeed! Oh, yes, I believe they are just driving timber for him. Have you really had a telegram from Willatz?"

"Yes. And I answered that they are busy with the timber," said the sheriff, chuckling.

"May I see the telegram?"

It was quite true; Willatz Holmsen was giving signs of life—an express telegram, with a red tab: "Urgent!" What was so urgent? To stop her in case she was going away, to beg her to come south at once and marry him as he was, in spite of the fact that the opera was not quite finished. "My dear Mariane's friend, find out diplomatically whether there is any hope for me, but without showing this!" A long, high-flown telegram, extravagant and absurd, the telegram of a man in love. He was not reappearing just at this moment out of chivalry and high-mindedness—he knew better than to approach her in that way!—but out of fear lest she should disappear for ever from his sight. "I am just leaving for the north, not so as to get nearer her, but because my two rooms here are to washed while I am away. Answer to Trondhjem."

"What am I to answer him?" said the sheriff.

"You shouldn't show anyone such a telegram on any account," she answered, blushing crimson. "Yes, you laugh, but I'll tell him!"

"Are you likely to meet him, then?" he asked in the most solemn tone.

She paid a lightning visit to the mirror to smooth down her hair with both hands that she might look her best.—"Shall I meet him? Let me look at it once more; doesn't he say he'll meet me in Trondhjem?"

"I can't show anyone such a telegram," said the sheriff.

"You ask what you are to answer; I'll answer it myself," said Mariane.

The sheriff shook his head: "You don't know how much timber has been driven."

"Have you any idea where my good friend and papa is? There is something—I only wanted——"

She turned at the door and asked the sheriff once more whether he had received the telegram.

"No, I bought it," he answered, and then they both laughed.

But—no matter how happy and excited Fröken Mariane had become and how much she wanted to start off south that very moment, the fact remained that there was no mail-boat for two days! She sent and received several telegrams in the meanwhile, and packed trunks full of clothes and things. Her father helped her; he was silent but happy—probably because he was glad that the diamond-cave was ready for use.

Then a big ship came in. Herr Holmengraa flagged; the ship lay to alongside his wharf; it was for him she had come. People did not know whether they were standing on their heads or their heels: was this a new grain-ship and had the King not fallen? Herr Holmengraa merely nodded as if to say that he had been expecting this ship for some time and now it had come. Then surely some sort of miracle was going to happen? A ship could not discharge grain for a bankrupt, nor could it take a fire-proof cellar on board and sail away again.

Herr and Fröken Holmengraa went on board the ship and stayed there a long time; the ship was dressed with flags as for a fête all the time the guests were on board, and when they went ashore they were accompanied by the captain. He was tall and yellow-skinned, and seemed to be from foreign parts; Fröken Mariane and he walked arm in arm, he spoke a foreign tongue, but he dropped a broken word or two in the Segelfoss dialect, at which everyone laughed. Mariane and Herr Holmengraa called him Felix.

So this was young Felix returned to Segelfoss—incognito, on a secret visit of a few hours. This was he. Every-

thing astonished him here: he had come home to a town; he had forgotten the people and remembered a few names only; he asked for "Julius?" for "Gottfred?" for "Willatz, Pauline, Per of Bua?" "Who owns that big new store? Theodore?" He did not remember him!

And now Herr Holmengraa, too, began to pack trunks and cases with clothes, and Bertel of Sagvika and Ole Johan took everything on board the ship: Fröken Mariane was to meet her fiancé in Trondhjem, and her father was going with her.

"Do you think he'll come back?" says Ole Johan.

"He'll come back all right. No one knows what he's going to do with the cellar," answers Bertel.

"They say he won't come back."

"Who says that?"

"They say the lawyer hinted at it."

They carried down the trunks and boxes; every time they went on board, Ole Johan asked many questions and received from the crew a torrent of incomprehensible words in reply. The captain himself was on shore, up at Herr Holmengraa's, or going about, looking round the neighbourhood. People met him here and there; he spoke to them and laughed, and could say a few Segelfoss words, but apart from that he spoke the strangest jargon. It must be *maal* he was speaking. The editor, Kopperud, was asked and he said it must be *maal.*

Since Pastor Lassen had been at Segelfoss, there had been a regular boom in *maal;* people were impressed by the fact that this learned and renowned divine was an upholder of *maal* and even preached God's Word in it. All Herr Holmengraa's workmen, who were now idle, took to speaking *maal* and astonished each other with the progress they made, and here was a great captain from strange and distant lands who also spoke *maal.* The captain went into the store too, looked round and bought one or two small things and talked volumes of gibberish; it was impossible to be mistaken, everyone knew what he said—yes, it was *maal,* their mother

tongue, it brought to their hearts the memory of their far-off Norse past. The idlers nodded at the captain hard and often and began to imitate him. He taught them a lot in a short time. What a pity it was that he went away again!

It was late the next morning when Herr and Fröken Holmengraa and the foreign captain went on board. News of this soon spread and the unemployed workmen thought, no doubt: "Is he bolting? Let us see!" The quay swarmed with people; Fru Irgens had accompanied her master and mistress down; she stood there crying, though she had received a good bundle of notes and was well provided for. So probably she was crying because she had lost a good place. The wharf-manager and his assistant had turned up in their best clothes and kept themselves respectfully in the background. Bertel of Sagvika and Ole Johan touched their hats to the mill-owner as usual and Bertel asked: "What are your orders? Are we to look after the cellar while you are away?"

Herr Holmengraa thought for a moment and answered: "The cellar? No, as the ship has come, I won't have any use for the cellar."

To Bertel he gave a fat envelope and to Ole Johan just such another, and told them not to open them until he had gone. Then he thanked them for their faithful service.

"Are you not coming back?" asked Ole Johan.

"As my daughter is going to be mistress at the Manor, I shall no doubt come and see her," answered Herr Holmengraa.

His answer spread about the quay; he was not running away, his daughter was going to live here, he himself was coming back again! That being so, the unemployed workmen gave up the idea of hooting and whistling through their fingers; they were really not such bad fellows, they even helped to cast the ship loose, and they gazed at their late master sadly. There he stood on board; he had never been a strict or severe master.—"A pleasant journey to you!"

They were really not at all bad. Only he mustn't send a thousand crowns ashore to be divided amongst them—they would at once begin to say it was too little; they would grumble because he had not sent two thousand, for was it not their sweat that had earned it? Their instincts are those of the proletarian, their avidity, unlike the beast's, is never stilled, their mouths are always open for more, more.

Theodore of Bua, too, heard Herr Holmengraa's answer, and a pang shot through him. Mistress of the Manor; yes, indeed, it was no news, it was no surprise. It was no use having a firm and being the foremost man in his branch of trade; fate was too strong for him. There she stood. "Fare you well, that is my wish!"

Then Ole Johan came pushing his way into the crowd like a loose horse; he had been for a little turn. Of course, the inquisitive old fellow had not been able to resist stepping aside and opening his envelope; he tramped up to Bertel of Sagvika now, saying: "It isn't a written character, as you thought; it's money. Just you look at yours!"

"When he has gone," answered Bertel.

Baardsen lounged up, thinly clad and half frozen, and pulled down by a wound he had had in his breast. The extraordinary Baardsen, the impossible Baardsen, dismissed from his post as superintendent at the station, and now telegraphist under little Gottfred; just as burly and rolling in his gait as ever, unrepentant, unembittered. He bowed to the gentlefolk who were standing on the deck, with a sweep of his hat at arm's length—no one could flourish an old hat with such an air as Baardsen. And the gentlefolk bowed as deeply in return; Herr Holmengraa thanked the telegraph-superintendent for all the work he had done for him; Baardsen again took off his hat and rolled away.

Herr Holmengraa called for Theodore. He encouraged the young merchant to still greater efforts; "remember me to your father and mother!" Mariane nodded to him. At the same moment the ship glided from the quay, and at that same moment Theodore was overcome by emotion.

The gap between the great ship and the land growing ever wider, this last nod from Mariane—it was a parting for life, it was inexplicable—he caught his breath.

"Your father is dead," said a voice at his side. It was Julius who spoke.

Theodore came back from another world: "What do you say?"

"Your father. He has just died. I have just come from the store."

"Is Father dead?"

"Yes."

All at once Theodore is back in his own world; he no longer looks at the ship, he no longer feels an inexplicable emotion; he hastens home and finds his mother.

"Yes, your father is dead," she says, weeping. "He was in such a bad way this morning that he didn't say a word. 'Are you feeling bad, Per?' said I, but he didn't answer. And now he's lying dead."

"Yes, yes," said Theodore.

He was not quite prepared for this death taking place so suddenly, but, indeed, it had not come too soon; at last God had done his father this kindness. Through Theodore's head flew many rapid thoughts—coffin, burial, cross for the grave. He went down into the store and chose for himself some black stuff to put on his hat. Oughtn't he to have black on his sleeve too? Which sleeve—who could tell him that? Perhaps both? Kopperud, the editor, knew what was right, no doubt, but Theodore was not friends with him—far from it. The photographer knew, perhaps? He sent the shop-boy to ask; no, the photographer didn't know. Theodore was particular in such a matter and did not want to make a mistake. Baardsen knew, of course. And oughtn't he to have a black border on his letter-paper, as people did in other towns?

He went out himself and looked up Baardsen, came back and hoisted the flag on the store half-mast high. I wonder if I oughtn't to flag at the theatre too? he thought, and gave

orders that a flag should be hoisted at half-mast there. Now the most urgent things had been done. Theodore was extraordinarily competent, even in the midst of grief, of domestic affliction; he looked to everything himself; he notified the sexton, the pastor and the sheriff of the death; ordered a grave; set the baker to work to bake sweetmeats. What made him so prompt and energetic? It was only decent to conceal it, but the fact of the matter was that he had done a good stroke of business by his father's death—here was a case where he had got his price without having to deliver goods.

By degrees the quay and the wharf had emptied of people; the great ship with King Tobias and his daughter on board had disappeared in the grey line far out on the horizon, and now the folks crowded into the store to take part in a new sensation. "Well, well, has he gone at last? Aye, aye! Our Lord made him suffer a long time before He took him to Himself!"

Lars Manuelsen only regretted, for Per of Bua's own sake, that he hadn't died while Lassen was here. "For then there might have been a really fine discourse at the grave."

VIII

AND it was true the discourse might have been better; there was a good deal of dissatisfaction with it, it wasn't what Segelfoss expected. Here was an exceptional opportunity for Pastor Landmarck to speak seriously to his parishioners, but he did not make use of it, and, besides, he could not preach. The public was all agog; aye, every ear was alert with curiosity—would the pastor mention Per of Bua's sins? Could he avoid it? He did avoid it.

Pastor Landmarck was a worker with his hands, he could

do turnery, carpentry and smith's work; he had a sense of form, of line—Per of Bua had probably never been guilty of a really great and well-proportioned misdeed; his wickedness took form of trickery, cheating and petty greed. Not that Per of Bua was a person of such small account either, but the pastor did not know him—one could hear that from his sermon; the whole affair was a matter of indifference to him. Everyone was disappointed with the discourse; Theodore, who was always on the watch, had taken offence at the pastor's uninterested tone and had not invited him to the funeral-feast, not he! "Even if he has been made chairman of the parish-council, that's no reason why he should be disrespectful to the departed," said Theodore. "And it's not every day he throws earth on a coffin like this one," said he.

This was true, the fame of this coffin was in everybody's mouth; it was grand; ordered from Trondhjem, with "Sleep in Peace," angels, two clasped hands, and ornaments on it—all looking like pure silver. Theodore let it stand a day on the quay, so that people might see it before it was taken into use. On the day of the funeral it could not be said that all Segelfoss attended, but Lawyer Rasch anyhow stumped to the churchyard—he knew, of course, what was due to a deceased client—and Theodore collected a fairly large following to take home with him—customers from round about the parish and, in addition to these, the leading people of the town. Among them was Lars Manuelsen, who, for the first time, wore a frock-coat—an overcoat. It was wonderful how his appearance was changed by his clothes, and the magpie—why, she didn't scream! Did she not recognize Lars Manuelsen?

The funeral-feast was of the very best, of course; no hot dishes, but coffee and all sorts of cakes and bread and butter and tinned foods and beer and grape-brandy. Julius again acted for the host, with Nils the shoemaker to help as waiter. Yes, it had been something like a feast. It has long been a thing of the past now, but some people have had reason to remember it, and among them was Julius.

In the evening he and Nils the shoemaker were suddenly called into Theodore's office to act as witnesses; the girl Florina was there already; she and Theodore were there together; there was an air of solemnity about them; neither of them spoke. "What do you want with us?" said Julius.

Florina did not stand with downcast eyes—on the contrary, she looked bold and defiant. She had stopped wearing the woollen shawl over her mouth for some time past—it no longer served any purpose; she suffered no longer from toothache or sickness, and the shawl was only a nuisance; besides, Herr Rasch had distinctly told her that she was to leave it off. There she stood. Was she to be cross-examined? All right!

Theodore of Bua opened the proceedings. "The post has arrived," he said, going straight to the point. "I have received a letter from my friend Didriksen," said he; "you remember him, Florina—the representative of Didriksen and Hybrecht?"

"What do you want with me?" asked Florina hotly.

"You wrote to his sweetheart, to Fröken Rachel."

Florina answered with bitterness and venom: "I suppose I should have sat still and not done it!"

"She has broken off with him," said Theodore.

"What do I care!"

"Now, I'll tell you one thing," said Theodore, "as I stand here with my friend Didriksen's letter in my hand. You haven't behaved like a *gentleman* towards him, but I feel I must do the best I can for you in the circumstances and pay you some of the money. You are a good customer, and, personally, I have nothing against you."

"How much does he say I'm to have?"

"Never mind what he says! But I'll pay you a round sum of a thousand crowns."

Florina gives a start; it is more than she expects, and she asks: "Can you do it?"

"You needn't trouble yourself about what I can do. I'll

take the responsibility. One thousand crowns against a full discharge. Julius and Nils, you are the witnesses."

Julius began to ask questions. He was not the man to hesitate about asking questions of high or low, and in this case it was only the girl Florina that was concerned. But he was only told what was strictly necessary, and Florina said: "It's no business of yours, Julius."

Then Theodore produced an imposing document with "this day's date" in it, and "the undersigned," and "in pursuance of a power of attorney," and stating that "in consideration of a sum of one thousand crowns the aforesaid Florina hereby waived all further claims on Herr Didriksen, traveller for Didriksen & Hybrecht."

But Florina had begun to think the matter over; she refused to sign: the amount was too small, she ought by rights to have another thousand, for that was what she had demanded; her mouth was open for more, yet more; "a travelling gentleman like that shouldn't be allowed to treat a poor girl just as he liked——"

In view of Theodore's representations, she signed at last, but not without murmurs; Julius touched the pen while Theodore signed for him: for the letters of his own name were just the very letters he wrote worst, said he. But Nils the shoemaker, standing there like a skeleton, wrote his name quite unnecessarily large.

"Do you want the amount paid to you at once, or do you wish it held at your credit with me?" asked Theodore.

No doubt Florina thought a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush, so she demanded the money.

And as Theodore had just received all the money for the year's split-fish, he was able to throw his fire-proof safe wide open and take a thousand crowns from a pile of notes which did not seem in the least diminished by this petty payment. The spectators gasped, and Nils the shoemaker laughed a silent, foolish laugh. "Here you are, count them yourself," said Theodore to Florina.

He was happy, he stood there as if leaning upon his sword—chance had compelled him to show his money; he would have been disappointed if Florina had declined to have it. Nor had he any further use now for Herr Didriksen's money, which some time before had stood him in such wonderfully good stead. It was fate; everything played into the hands of the lad Theodore.

Of course, he had received a letter from Herr Didriksen; that wild young scapegrace was on his travels again; probably he had written while in the middle of a jollification this time too: "The girl—what was her name?—the Segelfoss girl, the Lord be with her, but she has given the whole show away to Rachel—you remember Rachel, daughter of the Consul? Therefore pay the Segelfoss girl only one thousand crowns out of the money; she's a bad lot, she told tales and Rachel has broken off the engagement. In short, pay her whatever you think fit. The Chief—you know the Chief, always my very good friend and no end of a knowing chap—the Chief says we ought only to give her half, but I want the jade to get a thousand; she's worth it; I wouldn't mind giving her more, all I own. Rachel broke it off, at a most lucky moment, just as I had become engaged. You have no idea how charming she is; the lady belongs to this place; I've loved her all the time, but she only accepted me after I had bound myself to the other—what was her name? This one's name is Fröken Hybrecht, daughter of the head of the firm, eighteen years old. You shall see her portrait when I come. Since then Rachel has sent me another letter, but my mind is made up once for all and is not to be altered. I'm very happy, and as that devil of a Segelfoss girl is, in a way, the cause of it, I want you to thank her from me with all my heart. I will never forget Rachel; I was too much attached to her for that, but, after all, it was a passing attachment and one can't defy one's fate. Fröken Hybrecht's name is Helen, blue eyes, eighteen years of age. So be so kind as to give my best thanks to the girl, and please

accept yourself my deep gratitude for having so kindly undertaken the settlement of this matter. So long!"

Theodore's connexion with young Didriksen had a good effect upon him; the scapegrace was light-minded, but magnificent, open-minded and genial—Theodore forbore to take a commission from either of the parties and sent off the receipt and the balance of the money the same day. That was the day of his father's funeral—the same day when it dawned on Julius, the hotel-keeper, what a good wife the girl Florina had the makings of, and he began to make up to her.

After these great events Segelfoss settled down little by little. It was said that the mill was to start again in the spring, but it was winter still, and a hard time for many. Theodore of Bua showed himself more helpful in these days than anyone would have given him credit for; he seemed to radiate confidence, he fitted out a number of men for the Lofoten fisheries, and altogether gave people a chance to get along. For a long time the disturbance caused by Herr Holmengraa's collapse continued to be felt, but Theodore was no longer so short-sighted as to attack the mill-owner: it proved now that Herr Holmengraa had kept everything going, for, when the mill stopped, money disappeared from the locality, and Theodore's trade with it. The photographer sat idle in his little attic and died, Nils the shoemaker had earned his last two crowns at Per of Bua's funeral, and the *Segelfoss News* lost subscribers. Then it was that Theodore helped here and there and showed that his heart was not of stone. But it did not do much good; Segelfoss slept, trade had stopped, it was said the telegraph office would have to get on with one man and would most likely be closed altogether eventually. In any case, Baardsen would certainly not be wanted.

But as to Nils the shoemaker, he had become a mere shadow of himself, a kind of spectre, since there was no dancing any more and no dramatic activity at the theatre.

As long as his emaciated body had strength for it, he flitted along his gaping, ready-made boots, looking incredibly thin. What made the poor fellow both ghastly and comical was his smirking face, which gave one the impression that he was always thinking out a bit of fun; there was something terrible, almost insane, about it. His last hope had failed him; he had been to Lawyer Rasch's and he had gone in the office way so as not to be seen by the mistress of the house to-day again—in the office he had asked the solicitor if there wasn't going to be a bazaar for the Segelfoss Welfare Society soon and had received the reply that this was no time for bazaars. "No, no," said Nils; but it was his last hope. He went to the store and bought himself some small biscuits—probably no one had made such an art of starvation. "'Let me have a couple of biscuits for my afternoon coffee," he said. When he was to pay, he pulled out the same halfpenny several times and rummaged in his purse as though there were quite a number of coins left in it. He smiled when he went out. He had always found it easy to smile, but when he smiled now, it was from necessity.

A day or two later Baardsen came rolling into his cottage with food and brandy and in excellent spirits.—"Ha! I was just passing and so I thought I'd look in on you," said he. "Just taste this!"

Nils had taken to his bed—"on account of gout," he said—and so he hadn't any fire in the stove. He was more than willing to taste the good food and had a little dram too; Baardsen was like a doctor with him and said: "Not the sausage yet, that will only make you thirsty, but eat the bread and butter! It's jolly that you could eat a snack with me; I've been a long way and I had these things with me for lunch!"—Baardsen lit the stove and at last roasted the shoemaker out of bed to make coffee. "Ha! now we shall be all right, you'll see, Nils!"—"Things always go all right when the telegraph-superintendent comes!"

Yes, they went—but in what direction! In the eyes of all sensible people they were going downhill. Nils the shoe-

maker could not be set on his feet again by a meal and a dram—he was too far gone for that; and Baardsen did not care whither *he* went. He was aimless, he had thrown up his cards and drifted on from day to day. He went about killing time, musing a little, doing a little kindness to a shoemaker, drinking, 'cello-playing, and bringing out high-flown phrases—all prudent people must turn their backs upon him. But what a great burly dare-devil of a fellow he was even in his downfall! "If I weren't so beastly short of money at the moment, I'd restore the Trondhjem cathedral," he said to the shoemaker.—"It doesn't look as if you were short of money, sir!" the shoemaker answered, full-fed and already a little fuddled. The spectre!

Baardsen did not eat; no, but he drank. And yet he did not drink from vice and weakness in order to make his life bearable, nor from despair in order to end it—was Baardsen weak? Far from it. He was strong and firm of purpose; he thought this was the way to live. If he did not eat much, it was because he was suffering neither from hunger nor from repletion, but had just as much as he wanted; he was in good health. The two telegraphists had a kind of housekeeper—a woman to cook their food for them, but the woman had to stop working because she got nothing to cook. Gottfred ate at the hotel now, but, as a rule, Baardsen did not eat at all. Gottfred, wishing to help him, offered him dinner at the hotel, but Baardsen declined with thanks, saying: "It isn't worth while, my friend!" Gottfred had helped him throughout, both when he lay ill of his wound and later on when the shortage in his cash came to light and he was dismissed from his post as superintendent of the station. Baardsen was touched by so much kindness and thanked the young man for all his help, but he made no change in his way of living. Probably, from his birth, he had had a natural bias towards failure. Had he no kin, no family? A passing traveller, indeed, had thought he recognized in him the prodigal son of a great business house. Perhaps he had a family, per-

haps not. The amazingly happy-go-lucky manner in which he handled his own and others' money was possibly due to the fact that he had depended in the first instance upon a family who could help him out, so that his irresponsibility became a habit and he didn't care a rap about anything. But when the pinch came, he neither sought nor received help from anywhere, but begged the inspector to allow him to work off the shortage by monthly payments. Help? No. He might just as well have had no family. But, it is needless to say, Gottfred had to square the cash for him in the end.

So here he was sitting with Nils the shoemaker, delivering himself in high-sounding phrases about a certain custom in olden times among Roman nobles, who, when they suspected that they had fallen into disgrace with their prince, would open their veins or starve themselves to death. "A delicate and courteous mode of behaviour towards superior power; anything else would have been boorish. Think of great nobles having to stand up and face examination, stand and defend themselves from death—that would be the very devil! Why, in any case, in a hundred years no one will remember us."

Did the telegraphist, when he spoke like this, intend to be entertaining? He was no more drunk than usual, and knew well enough what he was saying. Or was it his intention to help the shoemaker to calmness and resignation in the face of the inevitable? "How much more, then, should we be polite to God and defer to His wishes?" said he. "For you and me, my good Nils, there's no longer any fun to be got out of making money by trade, or making a profit out of passing occurrences. What do we want with profit? We don't worry ourselves about such things—let others do the worrying. It is we who are on the right road; we do not sit like great lights in the midst of the riddle of the universe, but like dark objects in the midst of darkness, at one with it, at home and eternally happy. You have become refined, Nils; your face is not repellent, you have got

small, delicate features and you have nothing bold and impudent in your expression; you look like flour. That's because you have not stuffed yourself; the sages in India starve themselves too, that they may become white and pure within, for then they see salvation. You may be sure, Nils, that you and I are upon the right road."

"We must hope so," agreed the shoemaker.

"Your son in America might have sent you a little, but very likely that would not have made things much better for you."

"No, I can quite believe that. And, of course, things mayn't have gone very well for Ulrik either."

Baardsen said: "When the mail-boat from the south has been here, you must come to me at the station. Will you remember that?"

"Shall I? Am I to come to you?"

"Yes. I have reason to believe that I'll want to see you then," said Baardsen, in his odd way of speaking, and then he left.

He left his galoshes behind. Nils was so brisk by now that he went out on to the door-step and called to him about his galoshes, but Baardsen motioned with his hand that he did not want to wear them again, they were too small and hurt him; "throw them into the stove."

Then he wandered away home to the station. He knew full well how he stood; that he was done, that he was bankrupt, and he began to take stock of his position. Life and death had become of equal value to him, and this made him easy in his mind. Only a little time before, he had preferred life, but after prolonged meditation he had decided that his lot was a matter of indifference. He repented nothing. He had no desire to lay the blame on a powerful family in order to excuse his default. He was not in default. To whom was he in default, and for what could he be blamed? The shortage in the telegraph office cash would be paid, there was nothing else. Blame? Even to make a mistake in life may lay one open to blame, but he had not made a mistake—he

had enjoyed his life at the telegraph station; it had suited him, he could not have done better.

He was in the state now in which no misfortunes could touch him. The good things of this earth had been more than sufficient for all his needs, they had made his life pleasant, and he had certainly tasted them all, and so he ought to know. And when he drank, it was not so as to have a better time, but so as to go on having a good one. He had reached the goal of his desires—he asked for no more. Did he own more than his body and his clothes? No, he had reached bedrock. Misfortunes might come—let them come—he would cheat them of any triumph. . . .

When the mail-boat arrived, Baardsen received a yellow slip of paper, cashed a money-order and gave the money to Nils the shoemaker. Once more a plot, magnanimity, drunkenness—God knows what; was there any sense in it!

Yes, Nils the shoemaker had kept the appointment; he had the galoshes on, and he said they were warm and comfortable. There was something weak and wretched about him now; he was easily moved; tears came to his eyes although he struggled to keep them back and coughed loudly to cover his weakness. The sight of the money was too much for him; he sank upon a chair without being invited to sit down.

"From Willatz Holmsen," said Baardsen. "Herr Willatz is on his honeymoon; he is very glad to send you this money."

The shoemaker sat shrunken together and as helpless as an infant: "But surely the money can't be for me?"

Baardsen laughed gaily to reassure him, saying: "It's Willatz Holmsen's wish that you should live at ease on this money till spring. And if you wish to go to America with what's left, you can do so, he says. But, in any case, you're not to bear life any ill will when you leave it."

"Does he say that? Yes, these Holmsens at the Manor! his father was just the same, and now the son! No, does he really say that?"—Nils suddenly realized that he was

sitting, and got up; he thanked Baardsen over and over again; was quite overcome; began to bow limply, his whole face showing that he was ready to burst into tears. He couldn't say as much as "Good-bye" as he went out.

"He won't live till the spring," said Baardsen.

Surely Baardsen might have thought of that before, if only to prevent all sensible people from shaking their heads over him. A dying man to be set upon his feet again, to be given galoshes and money, to be equipped for life, in short—that he may go home and die! And that this should be done by a man on his honeymoon!

But there were many others in Segelfoss, and they were shrewder than Baardsen. When it became known what a rich man Nils the shoemaker had become, one after the other came and wished to borrow from him. "You won't want the whole of it through the winter," they said, "and we will pay you back after the Lofoten fishing!" Nils the shoemaker was not a stone, and he was getting stronger, too, getting enough to eat, getting clothes to his back, getting coffee—he lent money, at first with caution, then more and more freely. He began to find it pleasant to play the great man, he developed a taste for it, people became polite and humble towards him; in a few weeks he was as much of a benefactor as anyone. And his fortune was scattered around.

So at last there really was a little money circulating again in Segelfoss, and it all found its way to the store. It reminded one a little of the good days when the mill was in full swing—ah! there were still echoes daily from the times of Herr Holmengraa and of the mill. What in the world could have become of Herr Holmengraa? Had he perhaps not been able to keep his head above water any longer, and was he lying in a poorhouse somewhere?

But the general opinion was that Herr Holmengraa owned more than people knew of. Holmengraa in a poorhouse? A man who got a huge ship of his own to come and take him to a wedding! It might not have been his own ship,

of course; it might only have been a cargo-boat he had got to come a few hours out of her course. Theodore, who was by way of knowing so much about Herr Holmengraa's failure, was beset by people and questioned earnestly as to the purpose of the cellar. This cellar continued to haunt folk's mind, and yet, perhaps, it was only an artifice on the part of the fallen King—an attempt to shine for the last time in a supernatural way; empty bravado—that might be. "But is this cellar meant to remain there?" said people; "and is there anything in it?" said they.—"How can I tell?" answered Theodore. "And if I do know something about it, I'm not going to tell," said he.

"Let me have a few of your biscuits," says Nils the shoemaker; "but I haven't brought my purse with me, I find."

"Probably you haven't anything left in it, either," says Theodore.

"They've been borrowing from me—yes, of course I have more, but when they've been borrowing it's not so easy."

A man draws Nils aside—a man who is used to buy much gelatine; he is from a farm up on the mountains and does not know yet that the shoemaker is again on his beam ends—he wants to borrow money. They talk in undertones. "I suppose I must help you," says Nils at last. No doubt it is still a pleasure to act the great man and the benefactor.

The conversation in the store turns to the cellar again. "What should Herr Holmengraa want with a cellar for his treasures when he could take them with him in a ship and sail away?" "And, besides," said Theodore, "no one knows what there may be in the cellar. Is there a lock on it?"

Ole Johan is present and answers, no, there is no lock on it.

"Then there may be an opening in the wall itself. And there may be a little secret door in the vaulting. We often read of such things."

Ole Johan has made the cellar and there is not a trap-door in any part of it.

Lars Manuelsen is there too; he listens patiently and

silently, then he says: "I shouldn't wonder if there was a trap-door some place or other!"

"Can't I have a few biscuits?" asks Nils the shoemaker again. "But I haven't my purse with me."

"Let him have the biscuits," says Theodore to his assistant; "weigh them out for him," he says, because he isn't a stone. "But I don't feel very sure about letting you have anything on tick, Nils."

A strange thing to say. Even the man from the mountains, the latest would-be borrower, pricks up his ears; he draws the shoemaker aside once more and asks him if he can have the money. "I suppose I must help you," answers Nils the shoemaker.

So the days pass. Segelfoss is quiet and dull, but there's always something or other going on at the store—people collect there and gossip; the stove is going. The store is well lighted; Theodore is the only man who is well off and he keeps many lamps burning. The store has become an enormous shop; Theodore knew what he was about well enough when he built the store wall to wall with the old one —there came a day when he sawed out the partition-wall and then he had this huge shop. "How much do you think it has cost me?" said Theodore.

He is perfectly wonderful. In the trying times the town is going through, Theodore's good spirits and courage are a comfort to everyone; he is untiring in new devices, in keeping himself before people. He has a love of finery, but not the taste to choose it well, nor any great capacity for wearing it; but he loves finery for all that. No one now stands twisting up pokes in his shop. Theodore keeps big and little bags, and on them is printed his name. When his name was read on every bag and had become famous, he hit upon the idea of adding to the name a picture of the store—"to show what my place of business is like," said Theodore.

The only thing he lacked was a trumpet to blow.

In the evenings the store is full of people. They talk

of Baardsen, saying that he has been growing thin lately, that he is falling off, that God knows whether he's not starving. "It's true, he's growing thin fast, is Baardsen; it suits him though, he's growing thin in the face and white, and maybe that's from starving." They talk of Julius: that the girl Florina has gone to Larsen's Hotel, and that she's to be hostess and wife there. Julius himself is just the same as ever, but his sweetheart has given him a long pipe with a string of beads to it, and this pipe is to be seen sticking out of his pocket and gives him an air of respectability. They talk of Lawyer Rasch, who is now elected and is shortly to enter the Storting. He is pledged to support *maal* and to work for the reduction of taxes.

These are the things they talk about.

Now and then Theodore would throw in a word and everyone listened to his opinions, for he's a sharp-witted lad and a knowing devil. One day he surprised everyone with a wonderful placard on the store—it gave commercial news: "Exchange Quotations: Havre, 25th October. Coffee, 71½. Tendency maintained. Rio de Janeiro, 23rd October. Exchange on London, 10⅝₄. Freight to United States, 52½. Santos, 25th October. Tendency firm; shipments to Norway for the week, nil. Supplies in the interior of São Paulo, 66,000."

"Well, there you have the prices of coffee," said Theodore.

"It's grand!" they all said, feeling humble and ignorant, while he swelled with pride. "And can you reckon out the price of coffee that way?"

Theodore only smiled just as if it were a small matter for him to overcome such difficulties.

But now it was the turn of the *Segelfoss News*. Poor editor and compositor Kopperud! things were going badly with his little paper; subscribers were falling off, and Lawyer Rasch would not bolster it up any longer, once he was elected. What was Kopperud to do? Theodore of Bua did not help to add to his cares; on the contrary, he kept his advertisement running, and just this very day he had

actually put in an additional one: "Vacancy for Office Manager: competent book-keeper and correspondent in German and English; salary according to qualifications. Theodore Jensen, Segelfoss."

Oh!—did Theodore mean to begin to do business with foreign countries! This beat all. No one could tell exactly how far he might go; as likely as not, it would end in his buying the mill and getting grain from America and the Black Sea, just like Holmengraa, and beginning to make flour.

Theodore answered that his office-work was getting too much for him and tiring him out. He was going to get a typewriter too, said he. Now Herr Holmengraa's wharf-manager was out of work, and Theodore knew that this man had a hopeless love-affair in the place, and would rather do anything than leave Segelfoss. But it did not suit Theodore to engage the man and set him to work quietly; he wanted to make an impression beyond the bounds of Segelfoss, and so he advertised for him. It was just as well people should know that his firm needed an office-manager with a knowledge of languages. At one time he used to flag for any and everything—that was when he was little; those were childish tricks compared with what he was now doing—starting business with foreign countries. The wharf-manager applied for the post and Theodore took him, there and then, without any hesitation, with a lordly air. But at a moderate salary to begin with.

He said to Ole Johan: "Can't you get Bertel of Sagvika to help you to do some digging for me?" And he said this as if it were an ordinary matter, although it was midwinter and the frost was deep in the ground.

"Wouldn't it be better to wait till spring?" said Ole Johan.

"It's no business of yours if I want some digging done in the winter," answered Theodore. "It's to set up a cross on my father's grave. I don't wish to leave him lying there without a cross."

Ole Johan undertook the job.

The cross had arrived—a fine big metal cross, with gilt lettering for the inscription and the date, and a little gilt angel at each of the four points of the cross. It was a noble cross. In the whole of the poor little churchyard, the only fine tomb was that of the Holmsens of the Manor; apart from that, there was nothing but painted wooden crosses and bare mounds of earth—and now came Per of Bua's metal cross. And that was not all: Theodore had also got a railing to put round the cross. This beat all again. Ole Johan and Bertel of Sagvika had a long job; they had to make a bonfire in the churchyard to thaw the ground, but no money was spared. The work must be done. "For we must have things the same as in other churchyards," said Theodore.

And now his mother found something to do, going through the gate in the railing, shutting it after her and decorating the grave. She had this little spot which she could shut off from all the other women—it was almost like the flap at the store which shut out the common herd; it was well to be able to draw a line; it would be good for Ole Johan's wife. It was almost impossible to find flowers and greenery just now in the middle of winter, but one could do a lot with a few shells and it would probably be possible to get hold of an odd fuchsia or geranium. Fru Per of Bua decorated the grave every Saturday—to decorate it in the middle of the week would be a waste of time; the people who came to church on Sunday would have found everything faded and frozen stiff.

But the cross and the railing led to extravagances, for Fru Per of Bua infected the neighbours' wives with her cult of the tomb. People came to Theodore and ordered monuments for their dead relations; one did not wish to be behind another; more and more came; it was indeed a noble rivalry—and they would all pay after the Lofoten fishery. Theodore had to order illustrated catalogues from founders and stone-cutters; it developed into a regular business; stone monuments were generally considered the finest, and they ousted the metal ones; they were of marble and granite,

polished and unpolished, and of all colours—you could take your choice. There were crosses and pyramids and slabs and pillars and obelisks, monuments of every shape and form. One could have Scripture texts or other appropriate words cut on them: "We Shall Meet Again!" "Loved and Lost!" "Rest in Peace!" You could take your choice. And when people had chosen according to their taste and circumstances, Theodore would write for the monument.

This was all very noble and admirable, but it became an epidemic. No one could very well say anything against Lars Manuelsen and his wife's getting monuments for the graves of their two children who had been buried these twenty years; but Fru Per of Bua, too, had two children resting beneath the sod, and would they have to be railed in as well? No one could see an end to it; indeed, there were very few who had not relations lying in the churchyard to whose memory they now wished to put up stones. And this was not always managed without a certain amount of friction—as, for instance, when the father of the girl Marcilie chose a good place for a fine obelisk and Nils of Vælta came along carrying a little granite slab and claimed that his father lay buried just there.

Wonderful improvement took place in the little churchyard in the middle of the winter, and bonfires burnt night and day to thaw the ground and enable the digging to be done. But when Fru Per of Bua looked round at the graves now, she became discontented with the metal cross; there was no denying that monuments had risen round about it which were ever so much bigger and far finer. Would not Theodore, for his father's sake, go to the expense of another memorial inside the railing? And Theodore was not unwilling—magnificence and show appealed to him too; but he would wait and see how things went. What, he would like to know, was he to do with the old cross—was it to be wasted altogether? It would be a different matter if someone of the name of Peder Jensen were to die soon and if his age happened to be about the same—Theodore

could sell the metal cross then, and perhaps get his money back again.

Thus the days went by.

Theodore did quite a good trade in monuments during the winter and was in good spirits, and one evening he offered a gravestone to Baardsen. It was pure fun, of course, nor did Baardsen take it ill; he smiled kindly and pleasantly at the merchant. Baardsen had now grown amazingly white and thin; indeed, he looked as if he would need a gravestone very soon, and his eyes shone strangely. He had given up buying tobacco, but he bought a couple of biscuits of the same kind Nils used to buy to keep life in himself at a pinch. When he had received the biscuits, he paid for them and left.

A severe frost had come on suddenly, and Baardsen was thinly clad, but he walked without haste, as if he did not feel the biting cold any more; he walked with slow steps; perhaps he was unable to walk faster.

His goal was the station. It was dark; Gottfred had gone to his dinner. The two telegraphists had just had a squaring of accounts to-day and Baardsen had paid the last of his debt. He took up his 'cello now in the dark and went out again; then he plodded up to Segelfoss Manor and had a talk with Pauline. A sorrowful scene followed. He handed over his 'cello to Pauline and said it was for Willatz Holmsen when he came home.—"Indeed," said Pauline; "am I just to give it to him?"—"Yes," answered Baardsen.

A strange thing to do. Of course, the 'cello was not handed over from necessity or on compulsion: Willatz Holmsen was not the man to make a present of a sum of money to Nils the shoemaker on the strength of a security of any sort. And likewise Baardsen, on his side, was not the man to sell his 'cello; on the contrary, he would give it away to whomsoever he liked—give it where it would be well treated—the fine old 'cello. Farewell! Yet it was an odd thing to do, all the same.

"Oh!—are you not feeling well?" Pauline exclaimed suddenly.

"Yes," answered Baardsen, shrinking together as if in pain; "a stitch," he whispered, hardly able to breathe.

Pauline in her distress would have run to fetch Martin, but Baardsen groaned: "No. It will go over—in a little—it's only a stitch."

And, indeed, in a little he was able to take his clenched fists from his breast and breathe more easily. "It went over fairly quickly this time," he said; "it was worse this morning."

Ah! but he was evidently far from well even now—his lips were still bloodless, and Pauline asked if he wouldn't like Martin to go with him as far as the telegraph station.

He answered: "I'll get home alone all right. Good night."

He walked away steadily and Pauline got the impression that the attack was over. In the light from the windows, she saw him taking the road to the town and the station, and at that time he was walking upright—then he passed into the darkness, and Pauline could not see that he was seized again by a violent spasm that bent him double and brought him to a standstill. He looked about him; to reach the town was hopeless, and it was a long way back to the Manor—he stood huddled together in a corner and turned his head slowly from side to side as if looking for a way of escape. Then, when he became too icy cold to stand there longer, he dragged himself by inches in a slanting direction over the snow.

Pauline was the last to see Baardsen; day after day went by, and he was not found. They searched for him and dragged the river; he had not taken passage on any mail-boat, no one had seen him on the roads. Vanished! The *Segelfoss News* reported the occurrence in the last number before the paper stopped altogether.

So that was the end.

Theodore of Bua was getting ready now for his Lofoten business and was engaging men for the fish-sloop; first and foremost, he engaged Nils of Vælta, who was always one of the crew. The aforesaid Nils had been rather silent and down-hearted for some time, and it was the girl Florina's fault. He had behaved very foolishly that time in spring when he had cast off Florina and let her sail out into the bay with a strange commercial traveller. It is true that they had made it up again and had been to the Saturday dances together and to many other things, but at last they parted for good: Florina became rich, she had a bank-book and a pot of money, and at last she married Julius. Now she was mistress of the hotel.—"Fare you well; that is my wish!" But Nils of Vælta showed himself a man of deep feeling who did not forget his love so easily, and it was only because Theodore of Bua strongly dissuaded him that he gave up the idea of taking strong measures against Julius. After that his grief grew gradually less and less, and lately he had been making up to the girl Palestina. Maybe it was just as well for him, for Palestina was one of those who had a monthly account with the store and had the reputation of being trustworthy—whereas he had just heard that Florina had got the lawyer to have her money settled on herself out of her husband's control. So Julius was welcome to her.

The moon has gone and there are no stars to be seen; it it night and pitch-dark. There goes Lars Manuelsen; where is he off to in the dark? He takes the road up towards Segelfoss Manor, but when he has got a certain distance, he turns off slantwise across the snow.

There is no magpie's shriek, no warning sound, all is still. For the magpie does not take revenge to the bitter end; no, she does not do that—she inflicts punishment for seven months for the first offence and nine months for the second —that is her way, and she has finished punishing Lars Manuelsen for the first offence. God knows, too, whether it wasn't the magpie he had to thank for finding his spec-

tacles again—they were in the breast-pocket of his jacket, that duffel jacket with the eight buttons and pockets inside and out as if it had been made for the richest of men—there were the spectacles. And Lars Manuelsen's hatred towards the magpie became less bitter after he had found them.

Now he is going slantwise across the snow. There is no other place he can be going to than the cellar, Herr Holmengraa's diamond-mine, and what does he want there? Has he been unable to forget that there may be a trap-door somewhere in the cellar, and does he now wish to investigate it?

He reaches the door, it has no lock, he opens it and steps in. It is nice and warm inside, the cold has not found its way in. He strikes a match.

And then—the match drops from Lars Manuelsen's hand; a shriek of horror rises in his throat, but he succeeds in stifling it; it turns into a gasp, he staggers out of the door, staggers from the cellar, staggers away—he scarcely knows what he is doing till he finds himself outside his own cottage door.

When day comes he goes to Ole Johan and says: "Come along up to Holmengraa's cellar."

"What do we want there?" asks Ole Johan.

"We can find out whether there is a trap-door anywhere."

And as Ole Johan is a very inquisitive man, he agrees to go.

"I wanted to go in daylight," says Lars Manuelsen, "for I don't want to steal anything."

"No."

"For I don't need to."

They came to the cellar, and Ole Johan, being inquisitive, goes in first. But he at once falls back a step and says: "Baardsen——!"

"What? what?"

"Baardsen!" says Ole Johan. "He's sitting here. He's dead."

The two men hasten down to Segelfoss town again, to

the store. They come to solve a riddle—maybe they do not solve it, but they are bursting with their news. They go on talking and talking: "he was sitting in the cellar, he was dead"—all hear the news, they listen, they think it over and then go on to their daily work. So that is the end. And away to the south the swans are trumpeting.

THE END

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